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It just can't miss**

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KILLING**

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like you are making money
from their hobby**

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- > **Arcanum** > **Gunman**
- > **Anarchy Online**

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**The Ultimate In
Team-Based
Action**

FALL 2000

PC GAMER

VOLUME 7 • NUMBER 9 • SEPTEMBER 2000



Cover Story

JAMES BOND



54 The World is Not Enough, at least, not for Electronic Arts. Not content with just bringing Bond to the PC for the first time, they've also got the *Quake III* engine as the power under the hood. The result? Take a look at our exclusive insight into 007's first outing on the best gaming platform in the world.

Feature

65 Make a Killing

Wouldn't it be great if you could make money out of your favorite hobby? For many of you, it's a dream job, and for a lucky few it's a real job. Want to know the options? Check out our investigation of five different ways that your hobby could pay the bills.



Scoops

14 Red Faction

Considered by some to be the "Holy Grail" of gaming, Volition's *Red Faction* is on the fast track to becoming one of the greatest first-person shooters ever. Find out why this game has got the industry all abuzz.

21 Gunman

Originally slated to be a total conversion for *Half-Life*, Valve decided that *Gunman* was fit to become a stand-alone game. Take an exclusive first look at the game that blew the creators of *Half-Life* away.

23 Arcanum

The makers of the original *Fallout* have gotten together to work on a hot new roleplaying game. *Arcanum* is set in the world of magic just as an industrial revolution hits.

24 NASCAR Heat

27 Anarchy Online

28 Shadowbane



Red Faction, p. 14



Deus Ex, p. 82

Reviews

- 106 **Combat Mission**
- 82 **Deus Ex**
- 112 **Dracula: The Resurrection**
- 110 **Earth 2150**
- 98 **Evolve**
- 114 **Flying Heroes**
- 113 **Gromada**
- 104 **Ground Control**
- 103 **Klingon Academy**
- 93 **MDK 2**



MDK2, p. 93

- 94 **Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption**

Strategy

163 Deus Ex

If you don't already have this game, get it. *Deus Ex* is a solid contender for game of the year. For those of you that already own this gem, you may have found that it does get tough. Luckily, we're here to help show you the light and save the world.

170 Vampire

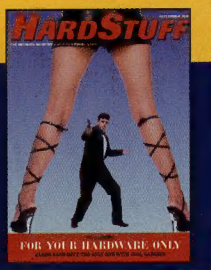
The life of a Vampire would be fun and carefree, if it wasn't for those pesky pointy stakes. Oh, and sunlight isn't too good for you, and neither is holy water. But fret not, we've got the best tips to keep you sucking down the red stuff for a long, long time.



Vampire, p. 170

The Hard Stuff

121 More 3D accelerator cards compete for your gaming dollars. Also, The Vede reviews a budget priced Falcon system and takes a look at what could possibly be the best CD burner in the world. All this, and Greg in a tux, too.



FOR YOUR HARDWARE ONLY

Departments

8 Disc Pages

40 Eyewitness

Microsoft has swallowed up Bungie. Find out what this means to the PC gaming scene, and most importantly, what will happen to *Halo*. Also, Capcom brings more console hits to the PC, and we've got the latest details on the new *Delta Force* game. And don't forget to check out our new contest!

140 Extended Play

142 The Point After

147 The Killing Box

148 Alternate Lives

Wolf takes a look at some of the problems that plague *Vampire* multiplayer games and decides that despite some kinks that need to be ironed out, it's an experience that's well worth the effort.



Alternate Lives, p. 148

151 The Desktop General

Summertime is here, and as we head out to beaches, theme parks, and zoos, The Colonel brings us a list of books that no hardcore wargamer should be without. Guaranteed to help you through the dog days of summer.

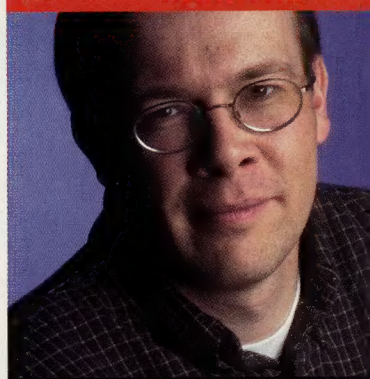
152 Sim Column

179 Letters

181 Backspace

Who is American McGee? What is he all about? What's in his pockets? And how'd he get that name? Find out in our always amusing interview.

LETTER FROM THE ED.



"Always go for the throat. Buy low, sell high. Fear...that's the other guy's problem."

Who doesn't want to be involved in this wonderful industry of ours? *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake* contributed much more to the industry than just classic gameplay. With mod makers and level designers slogging away to extend the life of the biggest games we all win, right? Well yes, of course ...and no.

What happens when one game lasts several months? Think about it — succumb to the *EverQuest* addiction and you don't ever need leave the house, let alone go buy another game. If you bought *Half-Life* (and if not, why not?), between *Team Fortress* and Neil Manke's incredible mods (available on the *PC Gamer CD*) your \$50 purchase yields significantly more play time than any game did a few years ago. The result? Gamers buying fewer games. Or is it, in fact, that you'll buy more games, since the ones that you're playing and enhancing are providing such a rich and rewarding experience, and you want to find more examples?

With such popular core games as *The Sims* including editors, thoughtful game companies are putting the tools for creativity in the hands of every gamer. So pick up that creative gauntlet and remember to share. Be it your first attempt or a seasoned pro at work, send us your mods and levels, and we'll thrust them into the spotlight.

So to the movie quote. No surprise that hundreds of you got Bluto's rousing statement of defiance. The one winner who this month went the extra yard was Devin Hester, whose poem of entry was fabulous (really, it was). As always, let me know where the quote atop this column comes from and you too could win wonderful prizes. Entries and comments to ednote@pcgamer.com.

Rob Smith

Rob Smith,
Editor-in-Chief

In the ancient land of Yamato,
an aging and power-hungry warlord turned to
darkness in his mad quest for eternal life.

His soul ravaged by the demon Raien,
the warlord released hordes of undead
warriors and hellspawn to crush all life from
his kingdom and the four houses of power
who swore fealty to his throne. As bodies
fester from the warlord's assault,
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final mission —
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action role-playing based on
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mayhem! Up to 35
people can play online and vie for
the mantle of Dark Warlord.

✿ Innovative character AI
gives you more than 30
commands for you to lead
your party through the
always-changing landscape
of the single-player game.

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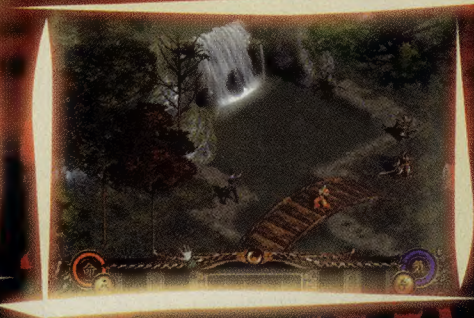
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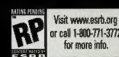
- Eat, burn, drown, crush, kidnap and bury your victims!
- Play as each of 3 different species: the Meccaryns, the Sea Reapers and the Giant Kabuto in intriguing story-driven single player missions with multiple cut scenes.
- Battle on over 25 strikingly beautiful 3D islands utilizing a vibrant color scheme unlike anything ever seen before.
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QUIT STALLING AND GET INSTALLING

SO YOU THINK YOU'RE A REAL GAMER? WE DARE YOU TO SAMPLE EVERYTHING HERE!

Another month, another 650MB of gaming goodness burned onto plastic. (Mmmm, plastic.) This month, you'll find buckets of exclusive material, including *PC Gamer Presents: They Hunger 2*, the long-awaited follow-up to the highest-rated *Half-Life* mission pack of all time. You'll also find a cool demo of *DS9: The Fallen*, and a couple movies in case you don't feel like interacting with your PC. If you're a fan of *Team Fortress Classic*, look for the *Half-Life* 1.1 patch that includes several new maps and TFC 1.5, as well as *Weapons Factory Arena* which gives you all the TFC goodness in the *Quake III Arena* engine. Now you know why our Disc Editor's mantra is, "Floppy discs are for wusses."

To enjoy the demos, just slide *The CD* into your CD-ROM drive and wait for the handsome interface to appear. Choose a game, read the README, and launch the install. It's that simple.

Unfortunately, we can't provide technical support for the games contained on the disc. However, if the disc itself is scratched or defective, you can order a replacement from <http://support.imaginemediacom.com>.

CONTENTS

GAME NAME	DIRECTORY	INSTALL	PAGE
Star Trek Deep Space 9: The Fallen	\TheFallen	Setup.exe	9
PC Gamer Presents: They Hunger 2	\Addons\Half-Life	TheyHunger21.exe	9
MDK 2	\MDK2	MDK2Demo.exe	10
Star Trek: Armada	\Armada	armada_demo.exe	10
MindRover	\MindRover	mrdemo105.exe	10
Pool of Radiance Movie	\Movies	M010_logos.bik	11
Red Faction Movie	\Movies	RedFaction.mov	11
Weapons Factory Arena	\Addons\Quake3	WFA-PCGamer.exe	11
EarthLink	\Elink	Setup.exe	11
Get-Socket	\Addons	Socket_Install_1.0.4.228.exe	—
Patches	\Patches	—	141
DirectX 7.0a	\DirectX	DX7aENG.EXE	—

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THE PC GAMER CD

2 ADD-ONS

Try these add-ons for the latest games, including new levels and maps.

3 SUPPORT

Click here to connect directly to <http://support.imaginemediacom.com> for CD support.

4 DATABASE

Curious about past demos or reviews in the mag? Check here.

5 COCONUT MONKEY

What's that crazy Coconut Monkey up to nowadays? Find out by clicking here for fan art, Coconut Monkey's web site, and more!

1 UTILITIES

Click here for a list of the utility programs included on the current CD.

INSTALL

When you're ready to install the displayed demo, click this button to launch the setup program. It might help to close the interface at this time.

PC GAMER CD Demos 2 Add-Ons 4 Database Utilities 3 Support 5 Coconut Monkey

Star Trek Deep Space 9: The Fallen

Tech Support: www.ds9thefallen.com

System Requirements: Pentium 233, 64MB RAM, DirectX 7

INSTALL NOW **VIEW README** **PRINT README**

Other Demos:

500 HOURS FREE Internet Access*
if you sign up NOW! *\$19.95/mo thereafter

PC GAMER EarthLink Sprint

6 THE README

View and print the readme file for the selected demo. The readme file usually contains technical information, control keys, and more.

7 THE DEMOS

Quickly and easily jump to the demo of your choice. Move the mouse over the picture to see a drop-down description of the demo, and click the picture to go directly there.



STAR TREK DEEP SPACE 9: THE FALLEN

- ◆ **INSTALL** \TheFallen\Setup.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** www.ds9thefallen.com
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Action
- ◆ **COMPANY** Simon & Schuster Interactive
- ◆ **REQUIRED** Pentium 233, 64MB RAM, DirectX 7

When Paramount announced the syndicated TV series "Deep Space Nine" about eight years ago, you'll remember the response was rather lukewarm. How could anything exciting happen on a space station? It just sits there, hovering motionless in space. Well, its popularity speaks to those naysayers, as does *The Fallen*.

The demo contains two maps from about halfway through the full game. You play as Benjamin Sisko, sent from above to SR-III, an unexplored class-M planetoid in Cardassian space. A Miranda-class starship, the U.S.S. *Ulysses*, crashed there several years ago, and the Federation is finally getting around to investigating what went down. According to recent evidence, it appears the science team aboard the *Ulysses* discovered one of the three lost red orbs of the Pah Wraiths before their ship was shot down. Red orbs, as we all know, are a very good thing.



In order to recover the precious, precious orb, Sisko and Worf (yes, *the* Worf we all know and love) beam down to separate locations to investigate crash pods. The demo picks up here, as Captain Sisko materializes on the surface. Use your tricorder to scan the area for clues. It will pick up life-forms, distress beacons, and interesting areas of the environment.

Be careful when you're running about. There is no save-game feature, so you will have to reach milestones in order to restart midway through the maps. Also, this is the *Unreal* engine, so expect DirectX support to be less than perfect and Glide to really shine. Under DirectX, we had better results setting the world detail and texture quality to medium.



PC GAMER PRESENTS: THEY HUNGER 2

- ◆ **INSTALL** \Addons\Half-Life\TheyHunger21.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** www.pcgamer.com
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Half-Life add-on
- ◆ **COMPANY** PC Gamer
- ◆ **REQUIRED** Half-Life 1.1, Pentium 133, 24MB RAM, DirectX 7

We get E-mail every day, every hour, from readers pleading for more PC Gamer-sponsored maps from master designer Neil Manke. *U.S.S. Darkstar* and subsequently *They Hunger* received unparalleled praise from the online community, both occupying the top spots of most best-ever lists. Today, we're happy to deliver his finest work to date.

Half-Life 1.1 is required. If you haven't upgraded yet, please refer to our Patches list on page 141. Once patched, install *They Hunger* by launching the file from the folder listed above, or through the Add-ons menu of the disc interface. It will install both *They Hunger 2* and an updated version of *TH1*, but will not delete any save games you may have stored.

After activating the game through the Custom Games menu, you can launch *They Hunger 2* from the main menu, just below the new game button. The story picks up right where the first leaves off, so if you haven't yet played the original, don't open the book and start reading from the middle.



You'll find everything you know and love about the first *They Hunger*, and even more. You'll be happy to find more weapons and ammunition scattered around the maps, along with a new melee weapon or two. Although the story is rather linear, there are some difficult puzzles to stump you. Don't get frustrated — the solutions always makes sense, and they're satisfying to solve. If you're completely lost, look for our strategy guide next month!

Thanks to Neil and his company of geniuses for bringing us another masterpiece. They are an inspiration to aspiring game designers.

Design/Level Design: Neil Manke
Design/Coding/Technical Advisor: Einar Saukas
Sound Producer: Magnus Jansen
Modeller/Skins: Jack Cooper



The gigantic plant is hungry for big green monsters. Feed him, Seymour — quick!

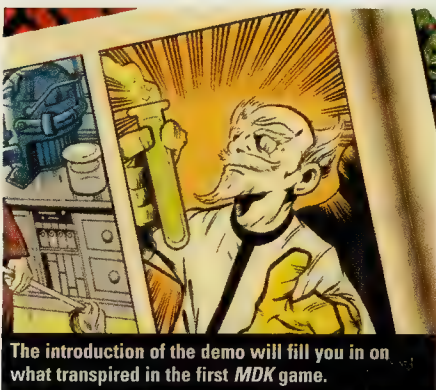
MDK2

- ◆ **INSTALL** MDK2MDK2Demo.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** www.interplay.com/mdk2
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Action
- ◆ **COMPANY** Interplay
- ◆ **REQUIRED** Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, DirectX 7

Don't ask; nobody knows what *MDK* really stands for. Some have speculated that it might refer to the three main characters: Max, the Doctor, and the janitor Kurt. Other, more bloodthirsty types think it stands for Murder, Death, Kill. In any case, it's the title of one amusing game worthy of your attention.

The demo gives you a taste of all three of the characters, but it's only a crumb dropped from the slice of wonderful toast that is the full game. As you'll see from the opening cinematic, the game tries to be a living comic book. It comes complete with terse dialogue, fantastic enemies, colorful graphics, a science-fiction theme, and unlikely heroes.

When launching the game, choose a resolution a notch higher than you usually use. The geometry isn't too complex, and this game is extremely smooth even at high resolutions. Given the variety of characters you play, you will also need to set up controls for each. Before heading into the game, hit the options menu to do so.



The introduction of the demo will fill you in on what transpired in the first *MDK* game.

MINDROVER

- ◆ **INSTALL** MindRover/mrdemo105.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** www.mindrover.com
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Strategy
- ◆ **COMPANY** CogniToy
- ◆ **REQUIRED** Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 3D Accelerator, DirectX 7

If, at heart, you are a kid who likes to experiment with circuits, wires, and explosives (and hey, who isn't?), then you are required by the gaming gods to install this gem of a demo.

In an industry overpopulated by copycats, this game is an answer to our prayers. It's unarguably unique. You construct robotic tanks, outfit them with sensors, thrusters, and weapons, and then let them loose to fend for themselves in a 3D arena against the opposing AI vehicles.

If it sounds like you need an engineering degree, you don't. The two tutorials in the demo will guide even the casual gamer through the motions of building an intelligent tank capable of winning lap races and a game of tag. You'll learn to mount sensors to the front of your tank and angle them to detect enemies on either side,

and then to trigger the appropriate thruster to steer toward the foe. You can even hook up speakers to voice sound effects when a sensor fires or a rocket missile is launched.

Once the tutorials have been tapped of their worth, you can experiment with more components in a testing arena, and even send created robots over E-mail to battle with friends' creations. If you're feeling really auspicious, you can even submit your vehicle to a contest — all with this demo!



The green triangles protruding from the front of your vehicle represent the range of the onboard radar.

STAR TREK: ARMADA

- ◆ **INSTALL** Armada/armada_demo.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** www.st-armada.com
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Strategy
- ◆ **COMPANY** Activision
- ◆ **REQUIRED** Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, DirectX 7

Armada is a 3D RTS that behaves much like its faithful 2D cousin. The demo allows you to play through the first couple of missions as Captain "Cue Ball" Picard of the Federation.

By his account, the Dominion War is over and the Federation is enjoying downtime. Rumors of renegade Dominion ships that refuse to accept the peace treaty has brought the *Enterprise* out to protect an outpost. As it turns out, the Dominion is the least of the Federation's worries.

We don't want to ruin the story for you, but Borg ships come from the future through a temporal distortion, chasing the USS *Premonition*, and Captain Picard ends up being yelled at. What's worse, the Borg don't fly

around in cubes anymore, but spheres! Surely, civilization is doomed.

Well, not if you can help it. As with most new RTS games, the keys can get rather complicated, so do take a look at the README. Most ships have special abilities that you can activate with the icons in the center of the screen. The *Enterprise* can capture and man derelict ships by beaming the crew over to them.



With the *Enterprise* selected, use the two icons in the center of the console to activate the special shield and beam crew.

WEAPONS FACTORY ARENA

- ◆ **INSTALL** \Addons\Quake3\WFA-PCGamer.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** www.captured.com/weaponsfactory/quake3/
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Action
- ◆ **COMPANY** Weapons Factory Software
- ◆ **REQUIRED** Quake III Arena

For all intents and purposes, this is *Team Fortress Classic* for the *Quake III Arena* engine, although neither party really wants you to hear that. One side owns the license, and the other has made significant adjustments to the game design, but at *PC Gamer* we cut through the bureaucracy to give you the straight dope. Mmm...dope.

This 80MB add-on includes 22 new Capture the Flag maps and eight player classes, in addition to a new Referee character that can kick players and change maps.



Assassins can cloak. You won't find this in TFC!

Play as Recon, Marine, Cyborg, Sniper, Engineer, Arsonist, Gunner, or Assassin in order to cut through enemy lines and retrieve the treasured flag.

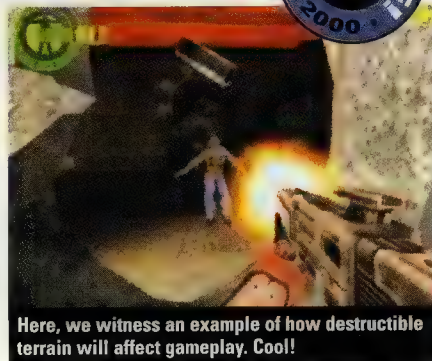


RED FACTION MOVIE

- ◆ **INSTALL** \Movies\RedFaction.mov
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** None
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Action
- ◆ **COMPANY** THQ
- ◆ **REQUIRED** A standard QuickTime video player

Check what's shaping up to be one of the coolest first-person shooters ever. *Red Faction* uses Geo-Mod technology to create completely interactive environments. What do we mean by "fully interactive?" We're talking about crumbling walls, collapsing bridges, and more.

Everything is fully destructible. Rockets blast holes in walls and tanks can crash into sniper towers, sending them toppling to the ground. Even the water is fully interactive: ditches fill with water as it rains, lava flows



Here, we witness an example of how destructible terrain will affect gameplay. Cool!

to where ever you divert it, and your bullet casings will bounce realistically off surfaces.

Check out this movie and see for yourself how varied the action will be!



POOL OF RADIANCE MOVIE

- ◆ **INSTALL** \Movies\M010_logos.bik
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** None
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Roleplaying
- ◆ **COMPANY** Mattel Interactive
- ◆ **REQUIRED** A "Bink" video player — radtools.exe in \Movies folder

If you haven't heard of this game, you're not a fan of *Dungeons & Dragons*. A decade ago, the original *Pool* was the first game officially to incorporate the popular roleplaying game license, and the upcoming sequel promises to be the first game to use the new Third Edition AD&D rules.

This is the intro cinematic, and it uses a newfangled video format called "Bink." (It appears all the clever names like MPEG and AVI were already taken.) Your system probably won't know what to do with this file, in



Evil, they say, never dies. We believe it.

which case you should install radtools.exe from the \Movies folder on *The CD*. Once that is done, you should be able to launch the movie by simply double-clicking the file.

EarthLink

- ◆ **INSTALL** \Elink\Setup.exe
- ◆ **TECH SUPPORT** (800) 395-8410
- ◆ **CATEGORY** Online Service
- ◆ **COMPANY** Earthlink
- ◆ **REQUIRED** 486 or better, 8MB RAM, 14.4Kbps or faster modem

EarthLink (www.earthlink.net) has really hit Internet-superstar status this year with numerous industry accolades, winning *PC Computing's* MVP Award and making *Fortune Magazine's* Fortune E-50.

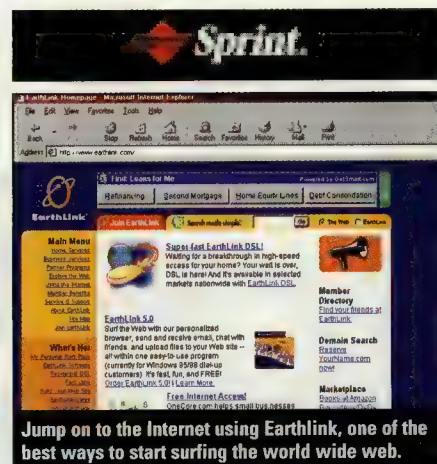
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You'll also get free E-mail, multimedia plug-ins, your choice of browsers, and a free subscription to *bLink Magazine*, EarthLink's members-only publication — featuring Internet tips, news, and reviews, and even a regular column for gamers! As if that weren't enough, EarthLink also has its own online gaming site (www.thegamesarena.com).

If you ever find yourself with a question or two, EarthLink is renowned for its customer service and round-the-clock tech support. They provide over 2,300 local access numbers nationwide and speeds up to 56K, making an EarthLink connection as solid as you can get. And you can use the free EarthLink Fast Lane software to continually improve the quality of your Internet connection.

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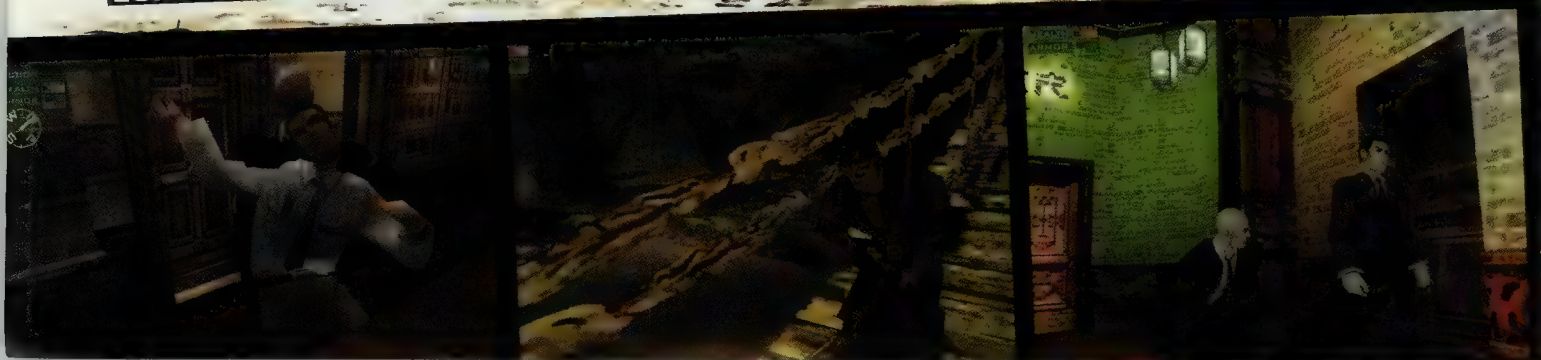




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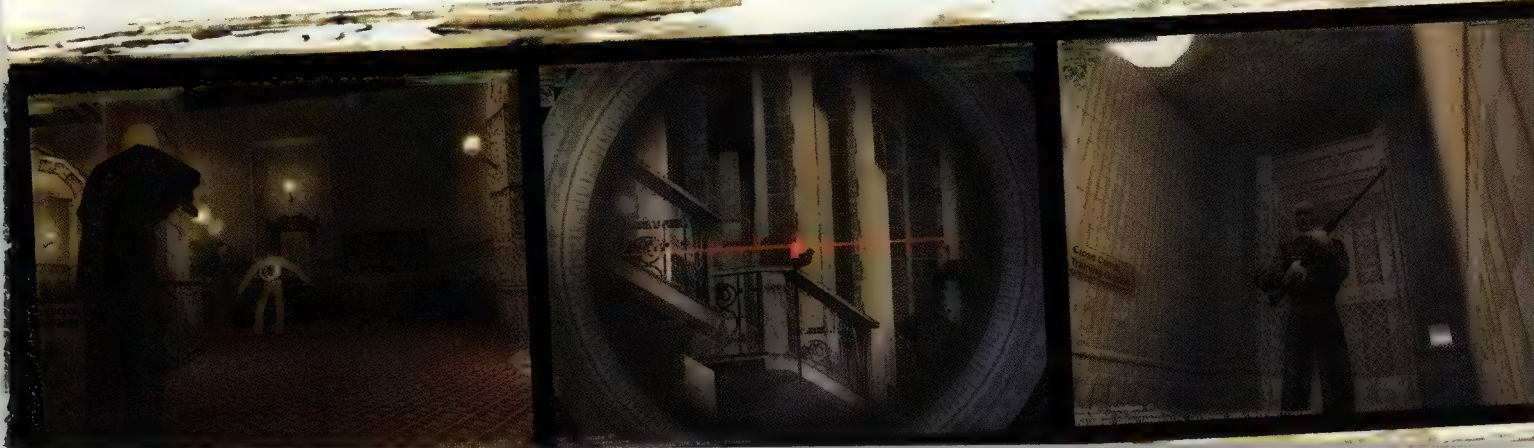
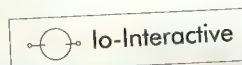
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RED FACTION

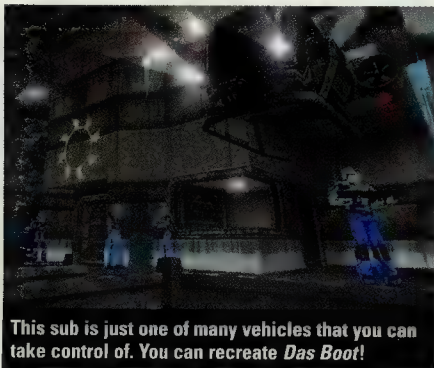
Like blowing stuff up? Then we've got the game for you!



EXCLUSIVE!

GAMEPLAY MOVIE ON THE CD

As we made ourselves comfortable in the demo room for THQ's unveiling of *Red Faction*, I figured I'd get the toughest question out of the way straight off. "So, what is it about this FPS that's going to set it apart from everything else?" Without hesitation, Rob Loftus, the associate producer, responded, "Take a look at this!" Half an hour later, I had come to the



This sub is just one of many vehicles that you can take control of. You can recreate *Das Boot*!

conclusion that the genre of first-person-shooters was about to get a much-needed kick in the pants.

What was it, you ask, that convinced me that *Red Faction* will make a very big splash when it hits store shelves next year? It's a new-fangled bit of code called Geo-Mod — essentially the engine that will power *Red Faction*. What this brilliant new piece of programming brings to the table is the ability to perform real-time, arbitrary geometry modification. Don't worry — when I first heard that phrase I had no idea what it meant either. Simply put, this engine is capable of simulating advanced physics effects on the environment — if you shoot something you put a hole in it relative to the size and trajectory of the projectile that hit it.

For instance, you can fire a rocket into the ground and it will leave a crater (to be used as a solitary fox hole). Fire off a few more rockets into the same hole, and you'll have a nice little trench for yourself to hide in. In other words, the environments are completely blow-up-able (for lack of a better description). Of course, it goes much deeper than shooting holes in the ground. Is that sniper in the tower bugging you? No problem...blow up the tower's base and

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Action

DEVELOPER: Volition

PUBLISHER: THQ

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 35%

RELEASE DATE: Spring 2001

IN A NUTSHELL: *Half-Life* meets *Total Recall* in a game that puts you smack in the middle of a Martian revolt. In your role as a blue-collar miner on the Red Planet, it's your job to see that the revolt doesn't fail. At your disposal will be a wide selection of weapons and a game engine that features truly deformable terrain...no scripted destruction here.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: The new Geo-Mod engine created for *Red Faction* delivers fully destructible environments...and we do mean fully destructible. Bridges collapse, towers topple, and walls crumble in real-time as a result of your actions. New strategies will need to be developed to deal with this amazingly interactive game. There's also a mix of vehicles to commandeer, ranging from subs to cars.



Few things are more satisfying than cutting loose with a fully automatic weapon.

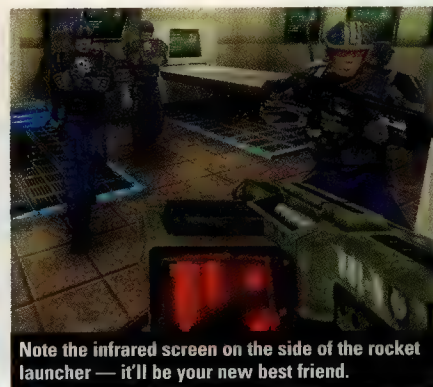
watch the little camper fall from his nest to a (well deserved) death. Stuck in a room with no keycard/key/lock combination? Blow a hole through the wall. Need to get inside a pipe? Blast it open. The possibilities are endless. "We wanted to give the player the power to destroy whatever he wants, not just pre-determined objects," says Alan Lawrence, lead designer for *Red Faction*. To emphasize the level of Volition's achievement in getting this engine functional, Epic Game's tech guru, Tim Sweeney, had described deformable terrain as "the holy grail of first-person gaming." From this showing, Volition "chose wisely".

THE PHYSICS OF LIQUIDS AND GASES

Structures aren't the only things that you can realistically interact with in *Red Faction*; liquids and gases also behave as they would in real life. If you see a stream of water, you can fire a rocket into the side of that stream and the water will flow into the new hole you just made. You can even completely redirect that stream of water and make it go anywhere you want. Smoke from pipes will travel in the direction that the wind is blowing, and sparks from electricity will bounce off the floor. None of this is pre-scripted; it's all on the fly. Even your bullet casings will bounce off surfaces realistically. For every action, there's a perfect reaction delivered by this impressive engine. Blow the support columns of a bridge and it will collapse, crushing any and all enemies beneath it. Needless to say, the Geo-Mod engine is unlike anything we've ever seen before.

However, as an old wise man once said (actually, it was just Rob Smith), "What good is an engine without a killer game to

go with it?" Luckily, Volition has proven time and again that it is a very capable development house. After all, it did bring us the excellent *Freespace* games. With *Red Faction* the group plans on surpassing anything it's done in the past with the goal of dethroning the current king of first-person shooters, *Half-Life*. To do this, a full-time writer is tasked with ensuring a deep and involving storyline. There will be in-game cut scenes, as well as in-game dialogue to keep the narrative going and draw you in. "We're focused on creating a realistic and consistent world for *Red Faction*, with the goal of creating the most immersive FPS to date," Lawrence says.



Note the infrared screen on the side of the rocket launcher — it'll be your new best friend.

The story follows a man named Parker, a miner on Mars who works for a large conglomerate known as the Ultor Corporation. Apparently, a deadly disease known as The Plague (that pro writer is earning his corn! — Ed.) is spreading through the miner population. Already stuck with inhumane living conditions, the miners decide that this is the final straw. A rebellion breaks out and Parker gets caught up in an epic struggle to bring down the Ultor Corporation and find a cure for the deadly plague. Of course, this won't be easy; Ultor is a very large company with great influence, power, and almost unlimited resources. And like any megalomaniacal conglomerate worth its salt, it reeks of pure evil. As should be expected, Ultor uses its influences to bring in a group of mercenaries to stamp out the rebellion.

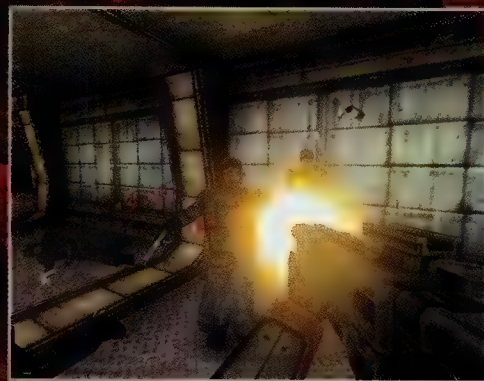
So what's a poor miner to do when faced with overwhelming odds? Get guns, of course...lots of guns. While the list of available weapons is not finalized yet, it has been confirmed that there will be around 15 of



While it is equipped with tons of weaponry, the APC is already a deadly killing machine without them.



Shhhh! Be vewwy, vewwy quiet. I'm hunting bunny wabbits.



them. Definitely making the line-up are a handgun, an assault rifle, a sniper rifle, and a rocket launcher, and the others will maintain similarities with real world weapons. Volition plans to ensure that all the weapons will have a satisfying and visceral impact — a direct result of the negative responses to *Unreal* weapons. The assault rifle fires either in bursts or at full-auto, and has a distinct chatter that will be familiar to anyone who has been exposed to the real thing (and lived!).

The sniper rifle is fairly standard issue, but is sure to please. The true head-turner will be the rocket launcher. This compact tool of destruction comes complete with its own infrared scanner. A screen attached to the launcher displays a red glob whenever an object that gives off heat is in range. This allows you literally to see through walls. For example, you could be walking down a hallway watching the scanner and spot the bad guys, even if they're hiding

behind something. You can then use the rocket launcher to blast through the wall and take those sorry sods out to pasture. Of course, the infrared scanner will have a limited range. Volition is still hard at work on the rest of the arsenal, but you can be assured that the final lineup will be more than adequate for your fragging needs.

Finally, there are the vehicles: submarines, APCs, and various flying vehicles round out the selection. You can use the APC to ram through walls, and it also has a mortar mounted on it to get rid of other pesky barriers. One of the most impressive parts of the demo was the underwater sequence where piloting submarines serves up some deep-sea action. The effects are incredible and will remind many gamers of *The Abyss* (but not that crappy ending). Enemy subs actually implode when destroyed, and the light sources are incredible. There's even plankton in the water to help give you a sense of motion.

With a promising storyline and the Geo-Mod engine in its corner, this could be one of the biggest hits of 2001. The engine should open up previously unexplored areas in the genre and add some much-needed innovation. If the rest of the development schedule is as productive as what's already been accomplished, we'll have to dust off some of the superlatives reserved for the likes of *Half-Life*.

— Li C. Kuo

KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

We all know how dumb the artificial intelligence in games can be: mowing down hoards of tansos in *Rogue Spear* as they run toward the sound of your MP5; watching as your AI buddies in *Opposing Force* run right into laser trip mines and cringing as they get stuck behind some rubble, unable to continue due to their sheer stupidity — nearly every game suffers from some form of AI brain-lock.

The development team for *Red Faction* faces all the usual AI obstacles... along with brand new ones brought about by having a fully destructible environment. Luckily, it appears that Volition is doing a great job so far. Enemies will actually take advantage of the destructible terrain — if you're behind a wall, they'll blast through it to get to you; if you blow a hole in a wall, they'll be smart enough to shoot at you through it. For once, the enemies are actually fully aware of their surroundings. If the developers nail this element, it will only raise the level of immersion that's so crucial to making a game a mega-hit.





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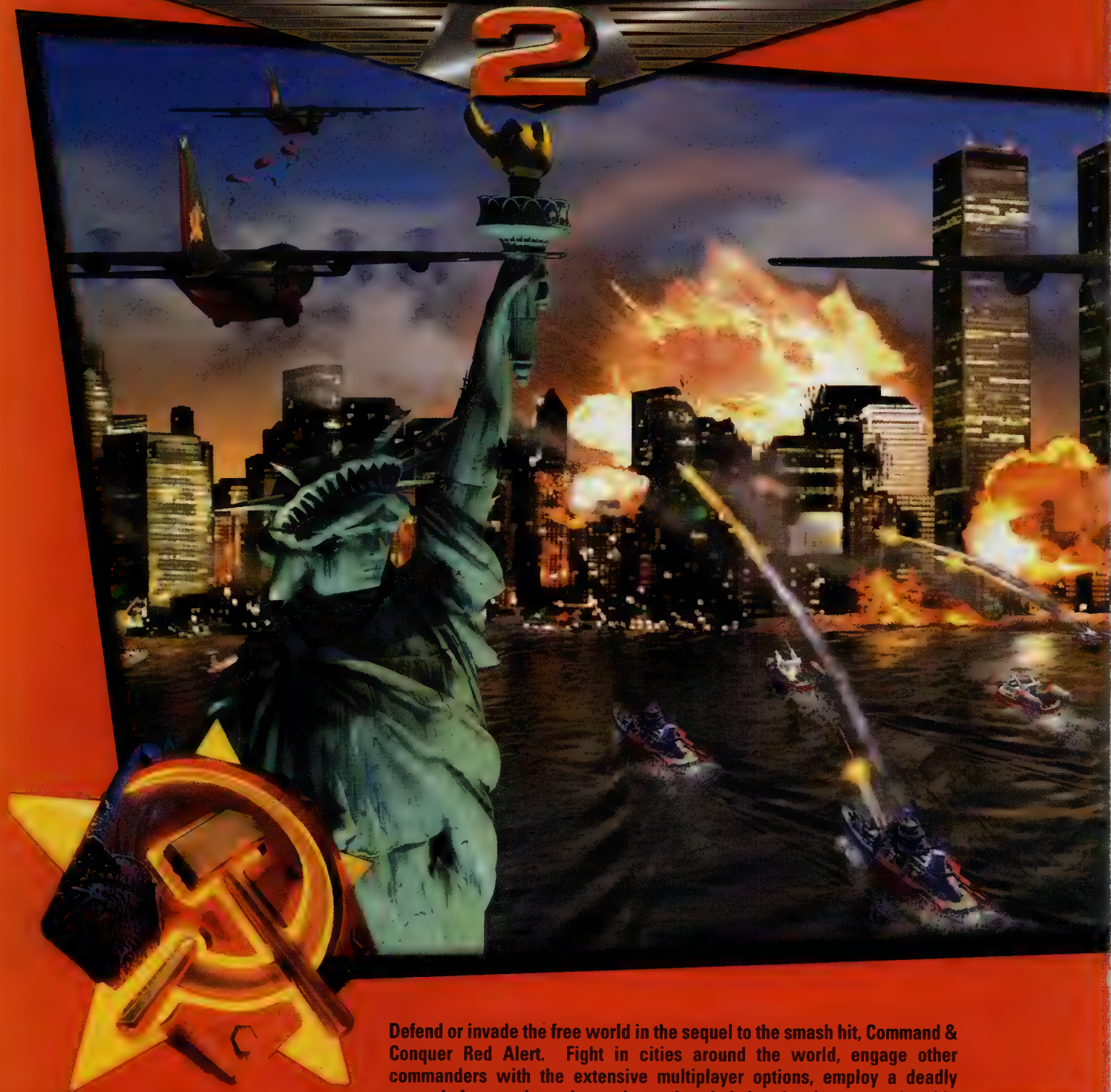
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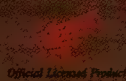
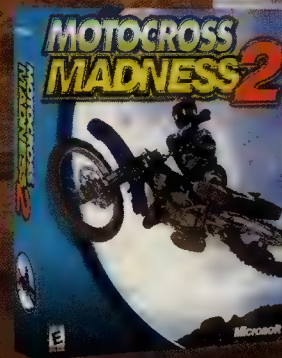


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Gunman

Surprise! An all-new, stand-alone *Half-Life* engine Valve game, and no one's heard of it. Until now.

This has got to be one of the all-time great stories of the gaming industry: Valve Software, the "It" developer behind *Half-Life* and *Team Fortress Classic*, is releasing a new, boxed stand-alone game next month, and nobody but *PC Gamer* knows a thing about it at press time.

How did this happen? How does the industry's hottest developer ready its first follow-up to *Half-Life* without anyone glomming onto it? The answer is one of the most inspiring rags-to-riches stories any amateur game designer could ever hope to hear.

Gunman began as a total conversion mod for *Half-Life*, designed by a team of amateur mod-makers with no professional experience among them. The mod was good enough to attract Valve Software, who funded the total conversion and planned to include it on a disc of *Half-Life* add-ons. But soon it became clear that *Gunman* was even more special than that; it will now become a full-fledged retail product from Valve and Sierra, independent of the *Half-Life* universe.

This "amateur" development team calls itself Rewolf Software, and its members are scattered all across the globe — some members haven't even met each other. Rewolf's lead designer, Herb Flower, was painting cars for a living before the *Gunman* project.

Flower says, "Being scattered usually makes it very difficult for a complex project like this to succeed. When a monster goes from a simple sketch to completion, it involves coordinating the 3D modeler and animator, skin artists, sound designer, programmers, and finally the level designers. We use ICQ and message boards to keep in communication, and an FTP to share files."

He adds: "Many team members saw this as a way to get into a very exclusive indus-



This little critter's hungry, and he thinks you'd be plenty rich in protein.

try where 'prior published products' is the most important line on any resume."

Professional-level skills are definitely on display in the alpha version we've been playing. The graphics are top-notch, particularly when it comes to the enemy models. Dinosaurs, cyborg bandits, hover-choppers...there is a bunch of cool stuff here.

You're one of the renowned Gunmen, the do-gooders of the western spiral arm of the galaxy. As hostile organisms called Xenomes begin attacking different planets, you assume command of the Gunmen and head off to wipe out the nefarious beasts and their mysterious human creator. The action will take you across four worlds: a desert West, a Rust techno-wasteland, a Mayan ruin world, and finally the starbase home of the Xenomes' mastermind.

The game will feature driveable vehicles, including a tank that tilts and tips to follow the off-road terrain and has independent movement and turret-aim controls.

It's all pretty impressive, and it would still be impressive coming from an established pro developer. It's amazing to think that a game of this scale was produced by a group of trans-global amateurs. The most intriguing Rewolf factoid: the 3D modeler, a



Your adventures will take you through Mayan, Old West, and future-tech environments.

South African named Renier Banninga, did some of his work from a laptop on his parents' yacht. "It was really interesting working with him as he'd disappear for a week, and show up in another part of the world suddenly," says Flower.

Rewolf's success is certainly encouraging, but Flower does have some advice for aspiring mod-makers. "I'd say that the mod community has too many chiefs, not enough Indians. Learn a skill. Starting your own is often frustrating because of the lack of dedicated artists and programmers willing to devote their lives to someone else's big idea."

— Daniel Morris

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: First-person Shooter

DEVELOPER: Rewolf

PUBLISHER: Valve Software/Sierra

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 80%

RELEASE DATE: October 2000

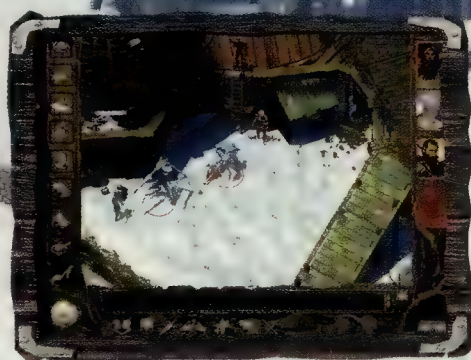


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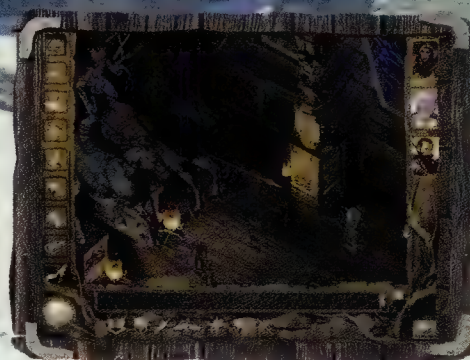
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Arcanum

A new RPG from the makers of *Fallout*? Say no more! We're in!

Every gamer should be excited to learn that the *Arcanum* team includes three of the people that worked on the original *Fallout* — including Tim Cain, *Fallout*'s lead programmer and designer. But this doesn't mean that *Arcanum* is a re-hash of older, established ideas (not that it would necessarily be so horrible in this case, since *Fallout* kicked some major post-nuclear ass). Quite the contrary, *Arcanum*'s world is one of the more interesting and unique settings in recent memory. Its combination of magic and science is an intoxicating blend of fantasy and pseudo real-world machinery that screams "play me" just on premise alone.

Humans, Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, and other races all live together in a world steeped in alchemy — but with a twist. There's an industrial revolution taking place, and as a result, magic and traditional fantasy-type weapons aren't your only choices. Depending on the character type you choose, and how you play your character, you'll be able to use all sorts of "modern" inventions ranging from steam engines, to muskets, to full-blown machine guns. Be careful, though, because there's a price to pay depending on how you specialize. If you play a magic user, he won't be able to use much — or any — of the cool "high-tech" weaponry, armor, or devices you might come across. Similarly, a technologist won't be able to use (or will be much less adept at using) magic items.

Aside from technology and magic, the designers say that there will be many different ways to play *Arcanum*. You can use force, be a smooth talker, or be a thief and make it all the way through the game. "All of these characters are viable in *Arcanum* (as are other magic-technological varia-



The game looks great, with its 16-bit color art and high-res, 800x600 graphics.



You'll have up to 80 spells and 56 technological degrees to choose from when fighting baddies.

tions), and each has his advantages and disadvantages. Each will play through quests in different ways and will employ different solutions to the same problems," says Cain.

Multiplayer is a must these days, and *Arcanum*'s developers, recognizing this, are adding it to their game. In order to do this, however, some minor continuity problems had to be sorted out. "The multiplayer game must maintain the same time flow for each player character," says Cain. "So, there cannot be a world map to travel on (as there is in the single-player game), because if one player travels for two game days across the map, he certainly doesn't want to wait for his other buddies to finish two game days of playing before he can start moving again." Even so, the meat of the game remains relatively untouched in multiplayer, and friends should still be able to go on quests cooperatively or in competition, and will even be able to share experience and treasure. As a unique slant on an established game style, *Arcanum* is shaping up to be a must-have title — and one that we're all looking forward to here at PC Gamer.

— Greg Vederman

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Roleplaying

DEVELOPER: Troika Games

PUBLISHER: Sierra Studios

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 70%

RELEASE DATE: Fall 2000

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NASCAR Heat

Uniting a divided genre, four wheels at a time

Two disparate camps — those that favor the arcade aspects and those that demand the nuts-n-bolts realism of a true simulation — make up the fan base of racing games, and it's the rare game that can appease both sides. EA's latest *Need for Speed* game, *Porsche Unleashed*, proved it possible, even winning over resident gear-head Andy Mahood, but this is the exception proving the rule. After spending time with *NASCAR Heat*, we think this may be another exception.

Developed by Monster Games, Inc. — the same folks who brought us the outstanding *Viper Racing* — *Heat* makes no bones about its simulation roots. "We have spent four years coding the physics engine behind *NASCAR Heat*, and have worked hard to get the most accurate tire data, suspension geometry, car setups, etc. In addition, the tracks and cars are the most accurate ever put into a NASCAR game," says Richard Garcia, MGI's president and former principle of that other racing sim developer, Papyrus. In our test drive, the stock cars responded perfectly to throttle, brakes, and lateral G-forces, and minutiae such as shock rebound, trailing throttle over steer, or spoiler angle are tweakable.

Now, Papyrus' *Grand Prix Legends* (GPL) was so accurate (read: difficult) that only the truly dedicated could make it around the track without ending up a decal on a road-side object (though Mahood made it around in record speed while drunk...show off). As a result, a lot of potential buyers were scared off, prompting Papyrus to alter its plan to use the GPL engine for *NASCAR 3*.

Garcia claims that such mind-numbing difficulty will not be the case with *Heat*. "We have added a driving model that is based on the simulation model, but has the



Picturesque tracks and top-name Winston Cup drivers are part of the game's many positive attributes.

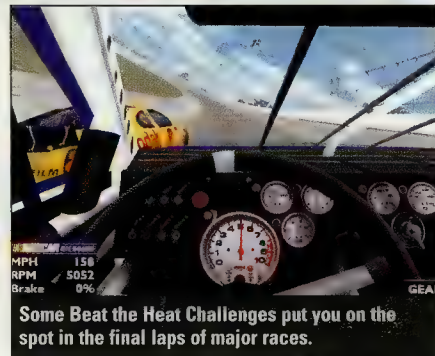
driving aids needed to make it easier to get around the track. The end result is an experience that feels realistic, but is more fun for the beginner to drive," he says.

It's a subtle, yet telling, point that Garcia makes. *Heat* defaults to arcade or "Normal" mode, not simulation, giving new drivers the option to dive straight in and cut competitive laps within minutes of install.

In another nod to immediate action addicts, *NASCAR Heat* includes thirty-some driving scenarios called Challenges. These pop you into the middle of the last lap at Daytona or a timed run through Watkins Glen's famed "esses," and teach you to master the test. It's a great way to learn to drive, and big-time fun.

Hasbro aims to enhance that fun with a full-blown NASCAR license covering tracks such as Darlington, Charlotte (without the collapsed walkway), and Daytona, as well as the drivers that race them: Dale Jarrett, Jeff Gordon, and Dale Earnhardt, among many others. There is even a special "Race the Pro" mode that pits gamers against the actual lines laid down by Winston Cup drivers.

"We spent a lot of time at the various race tracks while gathering data for our game," explains Garcia. "Many of the driv-



Some Beat the Heat Challenges put you on the spot in the final laps of major races.

ers tried out *NASCAR Heat*, and we recorded their best laps. With 'Race the Pro,' the player can race against these recorded laps. It is really interesting, as some of the racers (Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Bobby Labonte) are awesome, while others...well they do better with the real thing."

Garcia is obviously proud of his creation, "We feel we really got the sport right...I like the drivability," he says. "I think we got the right balance between realism and playability." We're inclined to agree with him, and think this may be another step in the uniting of racing's two camps.

—Mark H. Walker

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Racing

DEVELOPER: Monster Games, Inc.

PUBLISHER: Hasbro Interactive

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 80%

RELEASE DATE: September 2000

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but Family is for life.**

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Anarchy Online

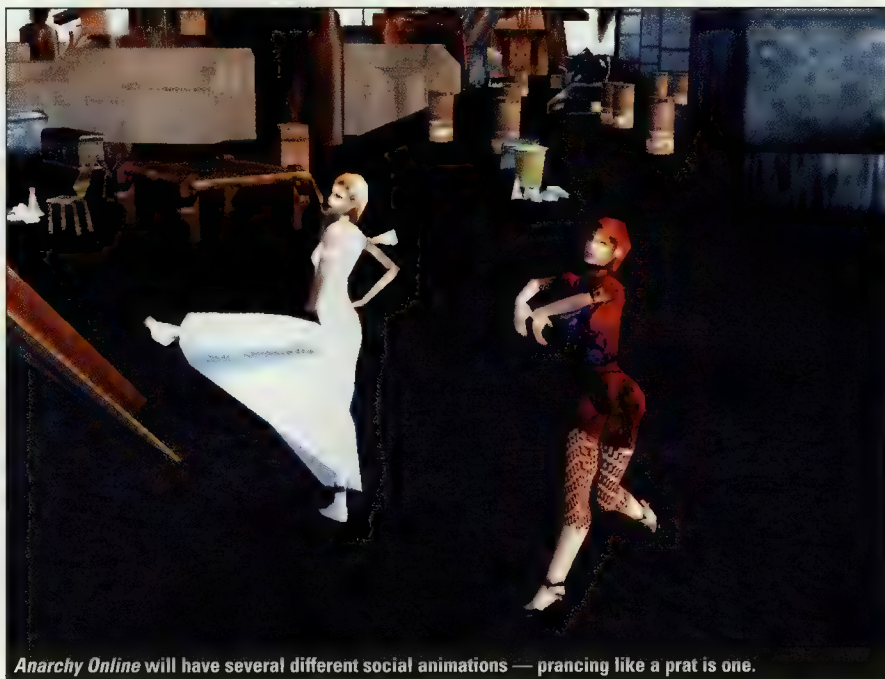
It's not often that you hear a producer say he hopes that his game will be pirated

Some of us have considered replacing *EverQuest* in our lives with a debilitating heroin habit; not because we advocate illegal drug use, but we think heroin is less addictive and we don't have to see our habit reflected on every month's credit card statement. Sensing our weakness, game designers have begun to orchestrate exotic new experiences that will keep thousands of us online and strung-out for months.

One of the most interesting new drugs on the horizon is being cooked up in European labs. Based in Norway and Ireland, developer Funcom has been hard at work for three years on a massively multiplayer RPG called *Anarchy Online* — a game it hopes will stand out from the crowd, while still having the power to separate us from our cash each month. Instead of rehashing ye olde elf and goblin tale, *Anarchy Online* takes place on a distant planet, centuries in the future.

The year is 29,475, and the planet is Rubika, a jerkwater dustbowl on the outskirts of the galaxy. The planet is divided between the massive Omni-Tek Corporation, which terraforms for resources, and the rebel clans who despise the corporation's plutocracy. Players can choose to work for either side, or try to remain neutral as long as they can. While most online RPGs are completely open-ended, *Anarchy Online* will have a four-year story arc that will come to a real conclusion. The developers have already created a "story bible" for the basic structure.

"When the game launches," says producer and lead designer Tommy Strand, "we will have several writers that will create 'episodes' to take the story further. In the story arc, there are several planned events that will change the face of history, but much of the experience will be left up to players."

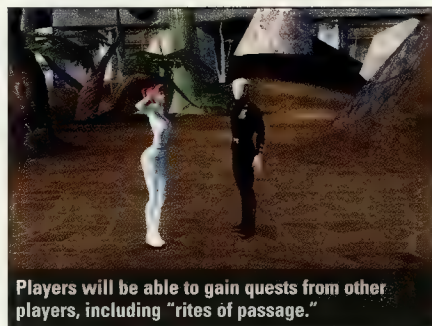


Anarchy Online will have several different social animations — prancing like a prat is one.

What will also be left up to players is an impressive range of characters to create. *AO* has four basically human "breeds," each with their own strength and weakness. Within each breed there will be at least 12 professions, with the possibility of more being added as the game progresses. In addition, there will be six abilities — such as strength, agility, and stamina — and more than 60 skills. You can choose to be anything from an urban, Omni-Tek bureaucrat, to a wasteland drifter who carries out contracts from clans.

But the amazing individualization in *Anarchy Online* extends beyond the traits of your character. There will be a surprising level of interaction beyond the standard clan formation. Funcom has included "tuxedos and wedding dresses for players who want to get married, as well as 40 other motion-captured social animations," Strand says. That sounds great to us, but what about the anti-social animations? Those will be in there too. *AO*'s character models will boast roughly 1,000 polygons each with three different animation zones. "It is possible to walk, wave, and get shot in the head without interrupting any of the animations," says Strand.

Visually, *AO* will be powered by the third generation of Funcom's proprietary 3D



Players will be able to gain quests from other players, including "rites of passage."

engine. Among other features, the engine will be resolution-independent, meaning players will be able to play *AO* at any resolution that DirectX and their video card can handle. With such good attributes, it's not surprising that Strand wants to get the game out there. "We are probably going to be the only ones out there encouraging people to pirate our release CDs so they can give them to as many friends as possible," he says. In other words, give 'em a taste just to get 'em hooked.

The beta test begins late this summer, and the release is planned for the end of this year. So start saving up...you may have another habit to support in the near future.

— Jim Preston

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Online Roleplaying

DEVELOPER: Funcom

PUBLISHER: Funcom

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 80%

RELEASE DATE: End of 2000

Shadowbane

Nations will rise, and more importantly, nations will fall in *Shadowbane*.

There is a strange paradox with most massively multiplayer online games — they bring together thousands of people in a gaming experience that is still fundamentally a single-player exercise. While clans and parties can be formed to go adventuring, rarely do the group dynamics ever get so large that it genuinely affects the game's world. That should change with *Shadowbane*, an online RPG that is going to put all of its emphasis on guilds and nations rather than individuals and parties.

The code is from Wolfpack Studios, an Austin-based team that has been together for a year and a half and into online gaming since the beginning. "Our first game," says Patrick Blanton, the lead system designer, "was a local dial-in game with seven modems attached to it. Not exactly what you might call 'massively' multi-user, but certainly a great way to get started." They were impressed by the kind of community bonds that could be created by MUDs, but feel that recent online games don't bring people together.

To capture that spirit, they are building a game that places the emphasis on epic battles between huge groups of gamers. *Shadowbane* will feature two types of player groups — guilds and nations. Guilds will be groups of players that unite for a common cause, like gold hunting or conquest. Most guilds will have to have at least 20 people, although exceptions will exist, because the goal is to have people feel a part of something much bigger than their immediate collection of friends. This will be emphasized by nations, which are a geographical collection of guilds.

Nations, however, don't just run themselves. Guilds will have to work together to share information and resources if they are to protect themselves from the expansionist



Dying in *Shadowbane* won't be fun, but the developers promise you won't lose a week's worth of playing.

threats of other nations. But do the developers really expect everyone in the guilds to work together for the betterment of the nation? "Hell no," says Blanton honestly. "What we do expect is that mismanagement and poor leadership will cause many of the nations to collapse. This is actually one of the things we're looking forward to."

The hope is that simple human nature will take over and lead to all sorts of messiness. Players can change guilds at any time, or start their own by buying a charter. Guilds will have to compete to be the ruling guild in each nation. Within each nation, there will be two kinds of cities — "safe havens" and "free cities." Safe havens will be free from player conflict; they can't grow in size or power, and they can't be destroyed.

Free cities, however, can be destroyed through coordinated, massive sieges. Blanton estimates that the sieges will last anywhere from 24 to 78 hours and beyond. The attacks will last days not only to emphasize the epic scope of the battles, but mainly because, "It isn't much fun to log in one morning and find your home in shambles," he says. If you do find your guild under attack, you better get to work. These won't just be minor skirmishes, but potentially multinational world wars where the skies are filled with flaming arrows, lightning bolts, and massive boulders



The developers say they are going for a much "darker fantasy feel" than other online RPGs.

from the trebuchets. "Nations will fall, armies will rise," Blanton says, "and the outcomes will be picked up by a half dozen online gaming sites, probably on a daily basis."

But what if the player just wants to avoid all that bloodshed and wander the earth like Kane? It's possible, but not recommended. There will be a number of pre-fab guilds in the safe havens that players can join and not worry about the hassle. Besides, some guilds will bestow special abilities on their members, so going solo won't be very good idea.

There is no word on the cost of *Shadowbane*, or who is going to host it, but Wolfpack expects it to be competitive with other online games when it ships next summer.

— Jim Preston

F.Y.I.

CATEGORY: Online Roleplaying

DEVELOPER: Wolfpack Studios Inc.

PUBLISHER: Gathering of Developers

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 50%

RELEASE DATE: Summer 2001

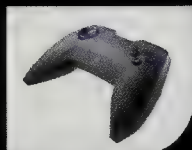
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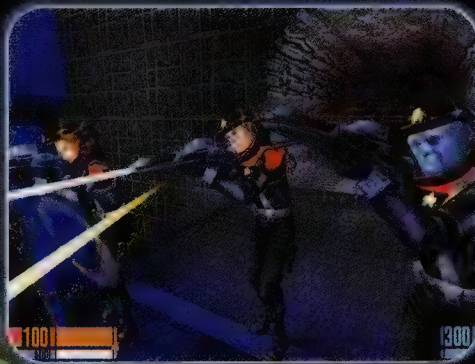
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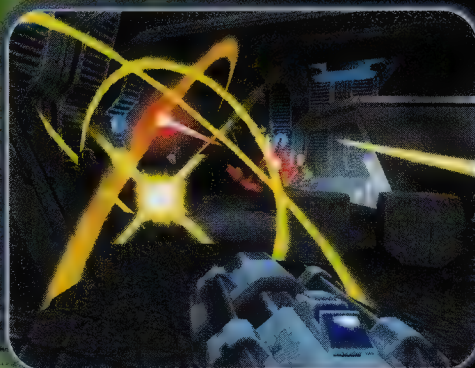
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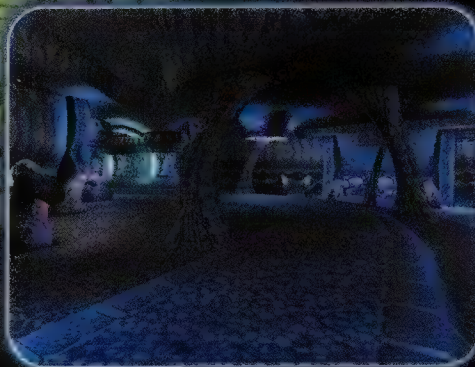
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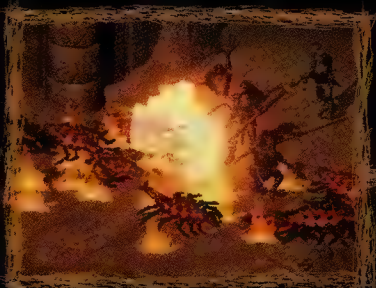
Often using nightmares to weaken and corrupt those who can best serve his dark purposes, Diablo employs illusion and fear as his greatest weapons in the tireless battle against Order.



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Microsoft Jumps Bungie...

Halo heading to X-Box (and probably not to PC)



Bungie upped its value to Microsoft by garnering plenty of press coverage from the PC magazines (including our three-page preview and a cover on the UK edition of *PC Gamer*) for a game that may never see the light of a PC day.

It's an ominous headline, to be sure. Though Microsoft has historically pursued companies with technology that outstrips its own to improve its software portfolio, and despite already assimilating FASA Interactive and Access Software into the collective, the purchase of Bungie was a surprise. Problems with *Oni*'s development (now a Take 2 property — see sidebar) and the disappointing sales of the excellent *Myth* series (also jettisoned to Take 2) certainly hindered Bungie's demand to be a big-time player in game development and publishing. "We were thinking about what we would do over next few years to grow and survive," says Alex Seropian, Bungie's CEO. "It was very obvious that this would change things for the better in a big way."

With Microsoft's vast pool of resources, Bungie is able to thrust itself to the forefront of game design...but not on the PC. "We're catapulted to the top in a new area," says Seropian of Bungie's position within the X-Box development setup. And that means that *Halo* is heading to X-Box.

Ed Fries, head of Microsoft's game division, confirmed that Bungie's *Halo* team "will be working closely with the X-Box team." Our question is how closely? "We need to decide whether [*Halo*] will run on X-Box," says Seropian, "and figure out how

it will work with the controller, and see the depth of the focus. We need to see how the networking works, so there are a lot of questions to answer."

All parties involved have dodged the pointed question of whether *Halo* will be an X-Box-only title — the standard response has been, "no decision has been made yet." We suspect, however, that the decision will be simple once the Bungie team (currently relocating from Chicago to Seattle's Redmond campus) gets down to the details and irons out those control and networking issues. "Most games we release for X-Box will be

exclusive. Only a few very special games will work well on both PC and on X-Box," confirms Fries, leaving the door open for *Halo* to be one of those "special" titles.

It's inevitable that the *Halo* engine would have been made available for licensing had Bungie remained independent, but that door would now appear to be closed to external developers. "Actually, we haven't discussed this, but historically we've never licensed any of our first-party games group technology to anyone else," says Fries. But historically, Microsoft hasn't had a lot of games technology that anybody would really want.

With the X-Box as Bungie's future focus, will Microsoft's impressive developer stable turn their attentions to the new platform? "We are focused on creating great games for both PC and X-Box," says Fries. "The vast majority of our X-Box projects, either internal or external, are with new teams."

Bungie joins those teams and will retain its own identity as well as bungie.net — important concerns for a company that had struggled to gain the recognition it felt it deserved as it drifted independently in the PC publishing business. Most of the 50 employees that make up Bungie's three design teams (*Oni*, *Halo*, and an unannounced fantasy game using the *Halo* engine) will relocate to Redmond. "It was a joke throughout our history that we would be bought by Microsoft," says Seropian of Bungie's proud independent roots. Well, the joke could be on the PC gamers who have been treated to inklings of *Halo*'s promise these past two E3s. With enthusiastic press coverage still ringing in their ears, they may see the rug pulled away for the new console system. We'll wait, patiently, and keep the faith that *Halo* will, in fact, be one of those "special" games (or that the X-Box control and networking mechanics fall flat, leaving the PC as the only platform for online action gaming!) We can hope, can't we?



The *Tribes 2* and *TF2* teams must be happy with their big name competitor delayed for a while.



Fearing backlash from the PC and Mac community, this guy now guards Bungie's Seattle office.

...Take 2 Takes Two

Oni and *Myth* — the ones that got away

Microsoft's purchase of Bungie was complicated by Take 2's 19.9 percent stake in the Chicago-based developer. The upshot is that Take 2 now has the rights to *Oni* and the *Myth* franchise, as well as "two free *Halo* engine licenses," according to Mike Wilson, whose Gathering of Developers (now owned by Take 2) will work with Bungie's west coast *Oni* team. "We've been trying to figure out a way to work with Bungie since westarted. We never thought it would happen in quite this way," says Wilson of the new arrangement. But how does he feel about the fact that *Oni*'s problems have lead to numerous features (including multiplayer) being dropped from the project?

"The design changed drastically mid-stream, to be sure, but the changes made weren't from any weird external or internal

pressure...they were made so that the game could be completed and be fun," says Wilson.

Myth's future is uncertain. "If we can find the right team, we'll look to continue the franchise for both PC and Mac most likely, since the game (and Bungie in general) has a strong Mac following," Wilson offered. As for the games set to use the *Halo* engine, Wilson says, "There's no word yet on what will happen with those."

As Bungie works on making the *Halo* engine play nicely with X-Box, we must question whether this affects the Gathering's plans for producing PC titles or having to stick strictly with the X-Box. Wilson assures us: "We will continue to produce great content for all viable platforms. Great teams and great content have always been our focus and will continue to be through this transition period."



This is an artist's interpretation of Microsoft's acquisition of Bungie (or, it's a cool shot from *Oni*).

NOW AND THEN

The Top-Selling Games Today...

Rank	Game and Publisher	PCG Rating
1	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire 2 Disney	N/A
2	The Sims Electronic Arts	94%
3	Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption Activision	76%
4	RollerCoaster Tycoon Hasbro Interactive	89%
5	Vampire: Collector's Edition Activision	N/A
6	Age of Empires II: Age of Kings Microsoft	94%
7	RollerCoaster Tycoon Corkscrew Follies Hasbro Interactive	N/A
8	SimCity 3000 Unlimited Electronic Arts	89%
9	StarCraft Havas Interactive	92%
10	EverQuest: Ruins of Kunark 989 Studios	86%

...And This Time Five Years Ago

Rank	Game and Publisher	PCG Rating
1	Myth Mattel Interactive	95%
2	Star Wars: Dark Forces LucasArts	92%
3	MS Flight Simulator w/scenery pack Microsoft	N/A
4	Doom II GT Interactive	90%
5	Heretic Shareware GT Interactive	N/A
6	Full Throttle LucasArts	90%
7	Descent Interplay	96%
8	MS Flight Simulator Microsoft	N/A
9	NASCAR I Havas Interactive	94%
10	SimCity 2000 Collection Electronic Arts	95%

THE PCG NEWS TICKER

Eidos Interactive announced that it was in the early talking stages with various potential purchasers that could lead to a buy out. Infogrames has shown interest, but as of yet, no offers have been made for the company with an impressive line-up.

After two years in development, *Jane's Attack Squadron* has been cancelled. Electronic Arts dropped the game after developer Looking Glass Studios closed down. However, an unnamed developer has expressed interest in the game.

Zombie will be bringing out a free expansion pack for *Spec Ops 2*. It will add 25 new missions, new multiplayer modes, and fix various bugs. Owners of the game will be happy to know that the AI pathfinding has also been addressed.

Talonsoft has obtained the rights to publish *Metal Fatigue* on American shores. This real-time strategy game had been in limbo ever since Psygnosis announced that it was no longer going to publish PC games. It should be in stores now.



Dino Crisis benefits immensely from the hi-res treatment, thanks to its full 3D engine.

Capcom Says Yes to the PC

Dino Crisis and *Resident Evil 3* are on the way

One of the largest and most successful console developers is bringing two of its greatest hits to the PC: *Dino Crisis* and *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*. The two PlayStation bestsellers are getting a hi-res facelift, a smart move that is often times neglected with ports. *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 2* were also ported to the PC some years ago, but with mixed results. While all of the gameplay elements were intact, the pre-rendered backgrounds — which looked so great on our television sets — looked terrible when blown-up to fit our hi-res monitors. But, bucking the trend of PC developers moving in to the console space, Capcom told *PC Gamer* that other titles could make the leap to the PC. In fact, a massively multiplayer PC RPG called *Raynegard* is being developed by Capcom in Japan, though there are currently no plans to bring it to the US.

Resident Evil 3: Nemesis is a prequel/sequel as it takes place after the original game, but before the second one. It follows Jill Valentine, one of two playable characters from the original *Resident Evil*, and chronicles the events leading up to the eventual fall of Raccoon City, the

town where all three games take place. The PC version will have all the hidden features of the PlayStation version unlocked right off the bat, such as the *Mercenaries* mode, all the alternate costumes, and the "Arrange" mode that starts you off with a big gun and tons of ammo.

Dino Crisis marks a change for Capcom as it tossed the pre-rendered backgrounds so prominent in the *Resident Evil* series and went for a full 3D engine. You control Regina, a member of a Special Forces group sent on to an island research center to investigate the disappearance of an important genetic scientist. As if the title isn't already a dead giveaway, the group soon discovers that the island is overrun with man-eating dinosaurs. The dinosaur animations blew away PlayStation owners and have come over to the PC side looking better than ever. All the easter eggs in the console version have also made it over to the PC, and, as with *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*, they are all available as soon as you install the game — no unlocking here!

Both games are nearly complete and should be on store shelves around the time you're reading this.

PC GAMER

RECOMMENDS

Games that are just chock-full of gaming goodness:

DIABLO II



94%

It's *Diablo II* — what else do we need to say?

ALLEGIANCE



91%

The best massively multiplayer space combat game ever!

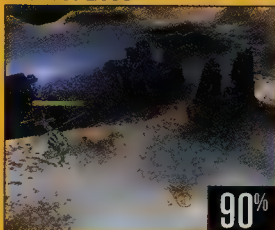
PGA CHAMPIONSHIP 2000



91%

Another great golf game for the virtual duffer.

EARTH 2150



90%

Strategy fans should be all over this one.

THE PCG NEWS TICKER

Agetec are rumored to be interested in bringing the Dreamcast fighting game *Soul Calibur* to the PC. The ideal locus would be in online duels, but this has traditionally proved near-impossible to do. More information on this as it comes in.

The *Unreal* engine-powered, first-person shooter known as *New Legends*, being developed by Infinite Machine (LucasArts alum Justin Chin's company), has been dumped by Infogrames. Infinite Machine is currently looking for a new publisher.

An online game based on the movie *Independence Day* is in the works from Mythic Entertainment. The game pits earthlings against aliens, allowing up to 20 players to play at a time. Beta testing has begun at www.MothershipGames.com.

Infogrames has hesitantly announced that *Duke Nukem Forever* will be released sometime during the second quarter of 2001. Those of us who are less gullible expect it to arrive around the same time as the rapture.

WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART

Finally, some sanity! *Ultima Worlds Online: Origin* has taken the coveted number one spot. This month's prize goes to Joel Eisenkramer, who just can't wait for *Team Fortress 2*. Vote for your most anticipated game by sending us an E-mail at eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "Waiting is the Hardest Part" in the subject heading. We'll randomly pick one lucky winner to receive a free game. Please, only one entry per month, per person. Winners will be notified by E-mail. See additional rules on page 40.

1. *Ultima Worlds Online: Origin* ... 22%
2. *Team Fortress 2* ... 18%
3. *WarCraft III* ... 13%
4. *Baldur's Gate 2* ... 11%
5. *Duke Nukem Forever* ... 7%
6. *Tribes 2* ... 5%
7. *Black & White* ... 3%
8. *Halo* ... 2%
9. *C&C: Red Alert 2* ... 2%
10. *Shadowbane* ... 1%

COMINGS & GOINGS

Programmerz in Da Hood

id Software — Jim Dose recently left **Ritual Entertainment** to join up with **id Software** to work on the recently announced new version of *Doom*. Dose has worked on *SiN* and *Quake Mission Pack 1: Dissolution of Eternity*. Ritual is currently developing *Heavy Metal F.A.K.K. 2*.

Fraxis — Fraxis has hired **Mike Gibson** as Director of Development. Gibson has been in the industry for ten years and has worked with **Disney Interactive Victoria**, **MicroProse**, and **Sanctuary Woods**. He will be working on *Civilization III* and *Sid Meier's Dinosaurs!*.

Synaptic Soup — **Vince Farquhar**, **Rik Haywood**, and **Karl Wickens** have formed a new development studio called **Synaptic Soup**. The trio worked on *Interplay's Evolve*. Between the three of them, they have worked on such titles as *Syndicate Wars*, *Dungeon Keeper*, and more.



Thanks to a new engine, you can explore the intricate interiors of these pyramids.

The Future of *Delta Force*

NovaLogic to release *Land Warrior* this fall

NovaLogic's *Delta Force* was a truly innovative game; for the first time ever, gamers were given the opportunity to snipe at targets as far as a thousand meters away. While games like *Rainbow Six* introduced us to the world of Close Quarters Battles, *Delta Force* showed us what it was like to take part in medium and long-range melees. The sequel, *Delta Force 2*, brought even more detail by enhancing the voxel engine (voxel stands for volume pixel, a technology which played a large part in allowing the game to take place in those wide-open expanses) and enabled partial 3D acceleration. Both games sold fairly well, so it's no surprise that NovaLogic is now hard at work on the latest addition to the series: *Delta Force: Land Warrior*.

For those of you that aren't gun nuts like our assistant editor Li Kuo, *Land Warrior* is the name of a new hi-tech weapons system to be employed by soldiers of the near future. This system outfits ground infantry with integrated video sights, head-mounted displays, laser range finders, GPS navigation, and more. The emphasis of this system is on small squad-based tactics rather than large troop move-

ments, which lends itself well to a game like *Delta Force*. It's a safe bet that the *Land Warrior* system will be modeled very closely on its real-world counterpart. In fact, *Delta Force 2* managed to catch the eye of the US Army, which asked NovaLogic to develop a modified version of the game that their soldiers could use for training.

The gameplay will be a bit different this time around, as you will take control of five set characters rather than just being a nameless soldier. This gives NovaLogic the opportunity to include a character driven storyline, something that was missing in the earlier games. As usual, there will be plenty of new weapons and features, the biggest of which is full support for 3D accelerators. 3dfx cards will now be supported (*Delta Force 2* required 32-bit color support, which ruled out any 3dfx cards). The voxel-based engine has been scrapped in favor of a brand new engine, but it will still be able to create the vast, open landscapes that *Delta Force* is known for, as well as create detailed interiors for some truly intense CQB. Of course, multiplayer options will still be available, as will NovaLogic's Voice-Over-Net technology. *Delta Force: Land Warrior* should be out sometime this fall.

Old-school console gamers will be happy to hear that *Mega Man Legends* is on its way to the PC. This 3D action/roleplaying game was first seen on the Sony PlayStation. Fans of the little blue robot can buy the game this fall.

Red Storm Entertainment stated that its space-sim, *UFS Vanguard*, has been put on hold with no word on when or even if work will continue. *UFS Vanguard* was a game that put players in the captain's seat of massive space battleships.

InterScope Records has authorized MasterPlan, a mod developer, to create a *Quake III: Arena* modification. This mod gives players the chance to deathmatch on an all-new level using Eminem and Dr. Dre character models. Bring the noise!

A prime time game show pitting contestants in *Unreal Tournament* deathmatches will be airing on English TV this fall. Realistic weapons like the enforcer handgun and the sniper rifle will be removed from play...can you say politically correct?

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**Last night, she shot you down.
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CRIMSON SKIES





Those French and their crazy contraptions.

Crichton Version 2.0

Timeline leaps to PC, thanks to Eidos

After tweaks, changes, and problems, it seems that the game based on Michael Crichton's *Timeline* book is full steam ahead. Eidos Interactive arranged publishing rights for the game as the creator of *Jurassic Park* and "ER" flexed his interactive bent by founding Timeline Computer Entertainment, Inc. However, certain problems with either the game's direction or focus caused Eidos to pull the plug. But over the recent months, it seems that these issues have been resolved, and development continues.

The extent of Crichton's direct involvement is unknown, but he's likely to oversee the progress occasionally. The game will loosely follow the novel, putting you in the shoes of students traveling back in time to find their lost professor. Most of the game will take place in feudal France, so players will have to avoid feuding factions of French and Englishmen. Looking at the screenshots, it's probably safe to say that the game will be played from the first-person perspective. So far we've received no word on a release date, but we'll have more information for you soon. Stay tuned!

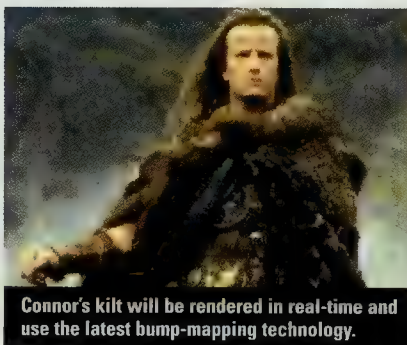
There Can Be Only One

Highlander game headed to PC

Okay, maybe there can be a few thousand if Kalisto Entertainment has anything to say about it. The development company behind *Nightmare Creatures* and *Dark Earth* has just announced that they're working on an online multiplayer game based on the way-cool *Highlander* franchise.

For those of you who may have missed the original 1980s' classic, *Highlander* is about a group of sword fighting immortals who can only be killed by decapitation. The movie starred Christopher Lambert as Connor MacLeod, and Sean "Scot" Connery as Juan "Spanish" Ramirez, MacLeod's mentor.

While the original was a hit, two appalling sequels and a so-so television series have tainted the franchise. Kalisto has managed to



Connor's kilt will be rendered in real-time and use the latest bump-mapping technology.

secure the game rights for both the movie and the TV show. Little is currently known about the game other than that it will take place in the *Highlander* universe and that it will be an online game. We'll keep you posted as we do that thing we do and get the latest details.

PCG CONTESTS

Delta Force



Calling in the Delta Force

In anticipation of *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, we've managed to snag some goodies from NovaLogic to give to you...our friends...our readers. Five lucky winners will each get a copy of *Delta Force* and *Delta Force 2*, as well as a *Delta Force* t-shirt, and a .50 caliber *Delta Force 2* dummy round (the same kind that are used in the .50 caliber Barrett sniper rifle, only it's a dud so you can't go around blasting apart cars with it). Five runner-ups will each get a *Delta Force* t-shirt.

To enter, just send an E-mail to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "Delta Force Contest" in the subject heading. Include your address so we have someplace to send the prize if you're picked. All entries are due by September 15, 2000. Only one entry per person. See additional contest rules below.

CONTEST RULES

No purchase is necessary, and only one entry per household, per month, will be counted. Anyone can vote, but only U.S. residents are eligible to win prizes, and the offer is void in FL, RI, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law. Your chances of winning depend on the number of entries we receive.

THE PCG RELEASE METER

Look! Over there, just over the horizon...it's games, lots of games! Uh-oh, looks like some of them might get delayed, but that's expected. Go to www.gonegold.com to get the latest info on release dates. Please send any news of release dates to laporte@gonegold.com.



TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE	PROGNOSIS
Heavy Metal FAKK 2	G.O.D.	08/01/00	Rocking on
Start Up 2000	Interplay	08/01/00	Accruing soon
Homeworld: Cataclysm	Sierra	08/04/00	Almost home
Reach for the Stars	Mindscape	08/10/00	Hope so
Submarine Titans	Strategy First	08/15/00	Already golden
Special Ops: Platinum Pack	Ripcord	08/15/00	At the rally point
Arcatera	UbiSoft	08/15/00	Let the adventure begin
Dragon Rider	UbiSoft	08/15/00	Right as rain
Sanity: Aiken's Artifact	FOX	08/16/00	Should make it
Time Machine	DreamCatcher	08/16/00	Clocks in on time
IHRA Drag Racing	Bethesda	08/18/00	Green light
Super Hornet Expansion	Titus	08/18/00	Lands around now
Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars	Wiz Works	08/19/00	Should be good
Sydney Olympics 2000	Eidos	08/19/00	Torch is lit
4x4 Evolution	G.O.D.	08/22/00	Probable
Ford Racing	Empire	08/22/00	Good so far
NASCAR Heat	MicroProse	08/23/00	Hope so
Grand Prix 3	MicroProse	08/23/00	On time
Madden NFL 2001	EA	08/23/00	In the end zone
Star Trek: New Worlds	Interplay	08/23/00	Make it so
Soldier	South Peak	08/23/00	Possible
Age of Empires II: Conquerors	Microsoft	08/25/00	Pretty firm
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Activision	08/27/00	Possibly
SWAT 3: Special Edition	Sierra	08/31/00	Probable
SWAT 3 Battle Plan	Sierra	08/31/00	Lock 'n load
Starship Troopers	Hasbro	09/01/00	Please be ready
Heroes Chronicles: Underworld	3DO	09/01/00	Super
Crimson Skies	Microsoft	09/01/00	Looks good
Arcanum	Sierra	09/03/00	Squeaks in
Deep Space 9: The Fallen	S&S	09/12/00	Yes
MS Golf 2001 Gold	Microsoft	09/15/00	Green is good
POD Racing 2	UbiSoft	09/15/00	Probable
Batman Racing	UbiSoft	09/15/00	Holy lateness Batman
B-17 Flying Fortress	MicroProse	09/15/00	Give it to us!
Legend of the Blade Masters	Ripcord	09/15/00	Next month
Baldur's Gate 2	Interplay	09/15/00	We hope so
Metal Gear Solid	Microsoft	09/15/00	Bet on it
Riddle of the Sphinx	DreamCatcher	09/15/00	About now
Jet Fighter IV	Talonsoft	09/20/00	Should be good
Sims: Livin' Large	Maxis	09/20/00	Count on it
STARS! Supernova	Empire	09/24/00	Hopefully
Blair Witch Project	G.O.D.	09/25/00	End of next month
NHL 2001	EA Sports	09/27/00	We're ready!
Need for Speed: Motor City	EA	09/27/00	Go! Go! Go!
Sacrifice	Interplay	09/29/00	Firm
Skip Barber Racing	Bethesda	09/30/00	Should be

Strip-Tease

Introducing Player Vs. Player

Have we got a treat for you! Starting this month, Scott R. Kurtz's comic strip PvP will be a regular feature of the Eyewitness section. Who, you ask, is Scott R. Kurtz? What the heck is PvP? Read on to find the answers:

PCG: So...PvP...what's it all about?

Scott R. Kurtz: PvP (Player Versus Player) chronicles the lives of the senior staff of a computer games review magazine (like PC Gamer, only fictional). It appears daily at www.pvponline.com.

PCG: Where did the idea come from, and how long have you been working on it?

Kurtz: The idea came when a gaming website approached me about hosting one of my comic strips. I jumped at the opportunity, and PvP was born. The strip ran for a year with a small following. I re-launched it in June of 1999 and it started gaining popularity steadily. Now it's my full-time job.

PCG: How many people have contributed to PvP?

Kurtz: PvP is me; it's a one man operation. I write and illustrate the strip daily, as well as create and maintain the PvP website. However, PvP would not be successful if not for its readers who have formed a strong and loyal community. There are PvP chat rooms, forums, and even an EverQuest guild.

PCG: Introduce us to the characters: who's who, and who does what?

Kurtz: Cole Richards is the straight-laced Editor-in-Chief. Brent Sienna is the pretentious and sarcastic art director. Jade Fontaine is the only female member of the senior staff, and never lets anyone forget it. Francis Ottomian acts as the magazine's resident tech support guy and power gamer. Robbie and Jase are two ex-jocks who do nothing but sit on a couch and play sports console games all day. Finally there's Skull, the lovable bumbling Troll who acts as the magazine's intern.

PvP

By Scott R. Kurtz



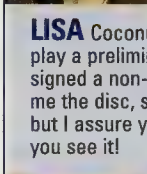
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THE PCG PLAYLIST

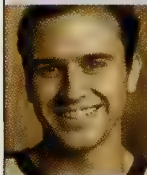
It's all about *Team Fortress Classic* 1.5, baby! Ever since the new patch came out, our offices have been a constant battle zone. We like everything from dustbowl, to warpath, to the classic hunted maps. Sans PCXL, the folks at *DailyRadar.com* have proven themselves to be some serious competitors. Here's a look at what we've been playing this month:



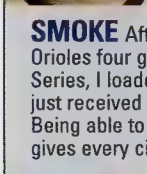
ROB Forays with the *PC Gamer* troops into *Team Fortress Classic* games only reinforced my firm belief that *Quake III* remains a permanent fixture on my hard-drive. It's so much faster and more visceral (and I kinda suck at *TFC*). *MDK2* is also a tremendous joy, updating elements of the brilliant original in one of the most fun games we've seen.



LISA Coconut Monkey was gracious enough to let me play a preliminary build of *Gravy Trader* this month. I signed a non-disclosure agreement before CM gave me the disc, so I can't describe *Gravy Trader* to you — but I assure you that you won't believe your eyes when you see it!



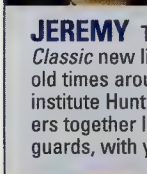
DAN I've always enjoyed a good conspiracy theory. Now that *Deus Ex* has finally reached my hard drive, I'm knee-deep in shadow governments, army-engineered plagues, quarantine centers, and secret genetic experimentation. The other thing I'm playing these days is "Taps" for *Incite* magazine.



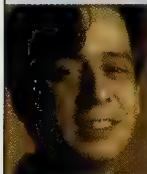
SMOKE After my Mets humiliated Mike Salmon's Orioles four games to two in the High Heat World Series, I loaded up one of my favorite games that had just received a makeover — *SimCity 3000 Unlimited*. Being able to replace each individual building really gives every city its own unique feel.



LI After realizing that I'm a poor *Team Fortress Classic* player, I delegated myself to the role of The Hunted. I haven't had this much attention given to me since grade school. Now I have an entire entourage wherever I go. It's nice to be taken care of. Sure, the assassins are a downer, but I guess that's the sacrifice that you need to make.



JEREMY The 1.5 patch has given *Team Fortress Classic* new life, praise God, and it has been just like old times around here. I'm convinced all offices should institute Hunted Friday. Little brings a group of coworkers together like a game of terrorists versus bodyguards, with your boss as the president.



JOE Still recovering from my car accident last month, I spent a week at home beating the computer at *NHL 2000*. I'm glad *Team Fortress Classic* is back; the long nights in the Imagine offices have been a blur of designing the mag and sniping heavy weapons guys. Or is it the other way around?



CHIAKI I can't stop playing *Boarder zone*. I love it. I love the sport. All summer I dream of flying down a white giant, and this is the closest I can get to that for now. My friends finally got me to play *Unreal Tournament* on the Internet for the first time. I got my ass kicked all over the place, but now I have a taste for blood!



GREG Destined to be the sleeper hit of the year, *MDK2* offers a truly fun, unique experience. Sure, it has its tedious bits (i.e. the Doc's levels), but overall, it's a rip-roaringly amusing game that's had me laughing out-loud at almost every turn. Be warned, though; it's a console platformer at heart, so don't go in expecting *Heretic II* or its ilk.

Tribes Gala 2000 will also be an opportunity to see *Tribes 2* in action and demonstrate your Tribes' chops.



Tribes Gala 2000

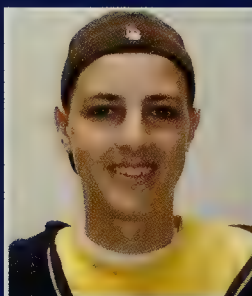
The Super Bowl of Gaming?

By the time you read this, hundreds if not thousands of people will be taking part in what is being called the "end-all, be-all" tournament of *Tribes*. Two final teams will compete on-stage and at least \$20,000 in cash and prizes will be given out to the various winners. Also, *Tribes 2* will be on show, and there is a possibility of a quick *Tribes 2* mini-tournament.

Tribes Gala 2000 will take place in the San Francisco Bay area at the Santa Clara Convention Center. It begins on August 11 and continues till August 13. For more information, visit <http://tg2k.gameevents.net>.

GAME FACE

SHOW US YOURS. Who are you people? We want to know. What do you play? What are you looking forward to? Would you like to see your mug adorning these pages? If so, send a photo and tell us the games you're playing, you love, you hate, you can't wait to see released to gameface@pcgamer.com and you could be famous.



NAME
Adam
ONLINE NAME
YoungBlood
FROM
Long Island, NY
LAST GAME PLAYED
Soldier of Fortune
LOOKING FORWARD TO
Team Fortress 2

NEXT MONTH

"Who do you want to be today?"

Computer games are the great escape, pitching you into positions of power. Every time you play, you test your mettle, your wiles, your willing, your guts, and your instinct. We'll showcase the new games that give you some of the most intense command experiences possible. Have you got what it takes?

Olympic fever will be in full force as the greatest athletes in the world compete for the coveted gold medal in Sydney, Australia. We won't be there, but that's because playing PC games has yet to become an Olympic sport (though if synchronized swimming and beach volleyball can make it, there's hope). Join us for the first *PC Gamer* Olympiad and see who's the best.

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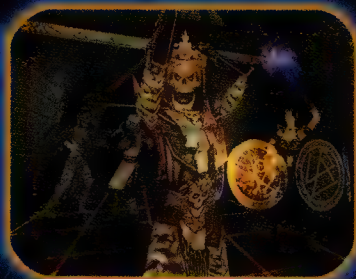
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MONSTERMAN™ 2000, Michael Manley © ActionPlanet.com

THE COURAGE OF LEGENDS IS



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Ladies and Gentleman, We Have a Winner

The judges have spoken, a winner is proclaimed, the search is over.

Some eight months ago, *PC Gamer* unleashed one of the most popular features in the magazine's history. We gave you, the readers and game players, the opportunity to pen a game design that we would thrust under the critical eye of some of this industry's most creative thinkers. Judging by the number of entries we received, nearly every one of our 375,000 readers entered...twice. Ultimately there has to be just one winner. After resubmitting the six monthly winners to our esteemed panel of judges, those luminaries voted and have spoken as one to declared one overall champion (it's on the next page if you're too impatient to wait).

The talented creator of the winning entry will be spending a week at the offices of ION Storm, where he'll be able to get first hand experience at a game design company.

For the remaining finalists, we offer a hearty congratulations — keep those thoughts bubbling, and heed the insightful comments offered by our judges as they assessed the entries.

Does this mean the end for the Design Lab? Hell no. It's your ideas that will keep this industry pushing the boundaries of game design and technical possibilities. We're working on another epic contest as we speak, and in the meantime we'll continue to print your entries.

So here are five runners-up — the games that piqued the interest of the judges every month, and that earned the right to be included on this auspicious occasion.

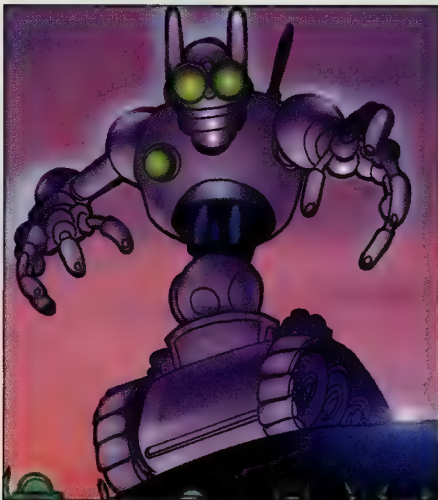
Month One

Winner: ROBOT WARS

By: Chris John

Judge: Chris Sawyer

I am writing to you to explain my amazing idea for a game, called *Robot Wars*. First of all, you design your robot. You have a whole range of different motors, weapons, and materials to use to make your creation. A good idea would be to have a fixed amount of



money to spend, depending on which mode you selected. Then you enter the tournament. You battle through all the rounds, playing games like the Gauntlet, where you have to guide your robot around lots of different obstacles. When you reach the final, you compete against various other types of robots.

All of this would have to be 3D, of course, with an overhead-view option for particularly bloody (*Oily, surely — Ed.*) battles. The multiplayer aspect would be amazing, catching on quickly all across the Internet. There would also be the possibility of a multiplayer-only game (as this is increasingly popular with developers). In the midst of battle, sparks could fly and flamers could torch heat-vulnerable robots. All the robots would respond differently — this would be determined by where they were hit, and by what hit them. Depending on the strength of material they're made out of, bits could fly off and dents could appear. It's all quite clever, and could work out very well.

Chris says: *There's a lot of potential in this game design. The overall concept would work very well, and it offers plenty of long-term gameplay. It wouldn't be easy to develop, though — a great deal of thought would have to go into the building blocks that make up the robots, and their effect.*



Month Two

Winner: PT Boat

By: Kenneth A. Mauder

Judge: Gabe Newell

World War Two, South Pacific, battle sim; need I say more?

Picture this: You're in command of your PT Boat, with the roaring sound of your engines in your ears as your patrol squadron is closing in on a Japanese convoy making a night run through "The Slot." Bullets are clipping your deck; you can see the deck guns of the escort vessels flashing in the darkness as they try to divert your torpedo run. Puffs of Ack Ack blossom all around you. The boat to starboard takes a direct hit in a beautifully 3D rendered explosion. You glance down and see the target distance closing but you can't fire just yet. Your gunners are raking the enemy decks with their twin 50s. "Fire One! Fire Two!" "Let's get the hell out of here!" Turn your boat and go like hell. Available with career mode and with historic missions. Now, this is a game that I would buy.

Gabe says: *Kenneth's suggestion makes me think of Wave Race with guns. It's basically a pretty sound game concept. I'd stay away from career mode and*

historic missions and just focus on it being a fun action game. This is a very implementable and saleable game concept — I think this is the one most likely to actually ship.

Month Three
Winner: Blaze
By: Jon Gina

Judge: Cliff Bleszinski

In *Blaze*, you assume the role of a firefighter and respond to the fire alarms as they come in. When a call comes in, you receive information about the fire in a planning mode and must choose the appropriate apparatus and manpower to combat the blaze. Once on scene, the mode switches to first-person and you must use the proper equipment (axes, ladders, etc.) to reach the fire and extinguish it. The objectives would be to save the preset number of lives and/or property. The intensity of the fires would increase as your character advances from probie to veteran, having fought residential fires, industrial fires, hazardous materials incidents, and so on.

The game would allow you to choose your role at the fire scenes as your skill levels increase, allowing you to perform ladder operations, rescue, or sit back as the incident commander and orchestrate the entire operation. Multiplayer options could be added for cooperative play where players come from different firehouses to fight the blaze.



Cliff says: This sounds a bit like *Burning Rangers*, a Sega game that came out a few years ago. I'm not sure if a title like this would really work well as a "first-person shooter." I think it might work better as a third-person action/tactical game where you can see how much "on fire" your character is. Ouch!

The biggest issue facing this design is that fighting flame after flame would get old after a while, even if you're fighting in different environments with different challenges. You'd have to implement a tightly woven story in which one pyromaniac has the city under

siege or one of your own guys is the perpetrator. For the multiplayer element, why not let someone play the role of the pyro?

This is a great example of design driving technology. A game like this would need the best-looking fire you've ever seen, or the fear factor wouldn't exist. I'm going to give this one my thumbs up, as a *Rainbow Six* meets *Burning Rangers* meets *Backdraft* would be terrific.

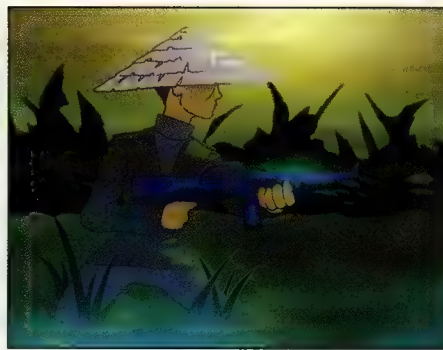
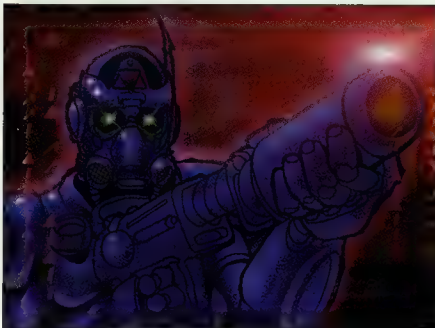
Month Four
Winner: Janus
By: Stephen Cutcliffe

Judge: Rob Pardo

It is the 22nd century, an era of relative peace and stability following the end of World War Three. Assassination has become the favored tool of corporate and international conflict. You are Mitch Kane, codename Janus — assassin, saboteur, diplomat. You have been chosen by ARENA, an international bio-technology corporation to infiltrate an experimental "City-Sphere" called Nova City. Your primary goal is to sabotage the city's infrastructure and assassinate the "Mayor" of Nova City, a self-aware bio-computer. Your mission occurs during a conference of the leaders of the world's 12 most powerful countries. You have been given the secondary task of interacting with (not necessarily assassinating!) some or all of these leaders in order to further ARENA's hidden political agenda. Whether you do this depends on your choices.

Key features include: combines roleplaying elements with intense first-person action; non-linear environment — go anywhere, do anything; the storyline changes depending on your actions; interaction with NPCs furthers the plot (tip the musician, give the little girl a sucker, and don't shoot the guy in the wheelchair!); weapons aren't always the best way to deal with a sticky situation (talk isn't cheap)....

Rob says: Sounds like a game in the same vein as *Half-Life*, which is a great example to follow. Make sure to focus on the core elements of your game. For example, if it is first-person action, then make sure this area is solid and fun first, and add in interactive story elements second. Be careful with too many non-linear elements. Freedom is great, but if a player doesn't know what to do next to complete the game, they will become frustrated and stop playing.



Month Six
Winner: Ho Chi Minh Trail
By: Chris Hope
Judge: Will Wright

You are an elite North Vietnamese soldier in 1967. Your mission is kind of like *Apocalypse Now* in reverse. You must make your way from North Vietnam to Saigon along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and confront a highly placed Viet Cong operative who may or may not be cooperating with American advisors.

I see this as a *Half-Life*-type first-person shooter, but with stealth, as in *Thief*, at a premium. Most of the action occurs during the trip down the trail, although the climactic end-game sequence occurs in urban Saigon.

Among the obstacles and mini-missions you have to deal with are: finding and capturing a downed American pilot, setting an ambush for a *Platoon*-style patrol, fighting off tigers and elephants, helping villagers defend against a renegade band of Viet Cong badasses, sneaking into an American base and sabotaging helicopters and arms depots, shooting down a helicopter or two, navigating a tunnel network, etc. You would have to travel narrow paths, cliff-side ledges, slippery mountain streams, mined roads, exposed rice-paddies, through the upper canopy of the jungle, Tarzan-style, and, in the final sequence, the streets and sewers of urban Saigon. Weapons and tools would include the obvious AK-47, machetes, and whatever you can pilfer from the enemy forces you encounter.

Will says: This idea sounds really cool. I'm not sure that I'm the best person to critique this since I've never done a first-person shooter, but this does sound like something I would consider buying. My favorite part of this idea is the role reversal that puts you in the shoes of a Viet Cong. There have been so many films and such showing the Vietnam war from the U.S. perspective that I would find the view from the other side to possibly be quite illuminating.

I think I'll have to pick this as the winner just because I have a gut feeling that it could be more marketable than *Inoculant* (another entry for this month) and would be a much easier concept to communicate to the gamers.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAN FRAGA



The Grand Prize Winner

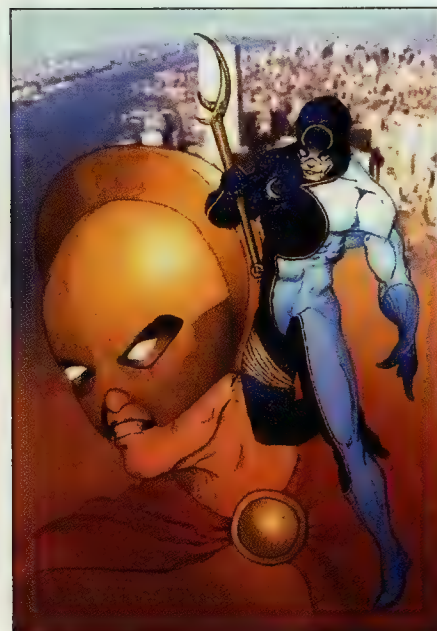
Month Five

Winner: Metro City
By: Bobby Slade,
Lawrenceville, GA

Judge: Will Stahl

I would create a persistent online RPG universe with a story revolving around comic book super heroes. The venue would be a large urban city, complete with skyscrapers, red light districts, gothic churches, and sewer catacombs. To begin, you would decide between a good or bad persona. You would then develop a theme for your character by distributing an allotted amount of game points among your attributes that would ultimately decide if your character had energy, mental, physical, weapon, or skill based powers or a combination.

Those choosing to follow justice would bust up pool halls to flush out nefarious kingpins about town. Likewise, those choosing to thwart the law would be preying on simple pedestrians, shop owners, armored cars, or



banks. Rewards would consist of game points (applied toward attributes) and merit badges (bragging rights) for the law enforcers and game points and reputation banners for the criminal types. Secondary skills might consist of gambling, weapon maker, detective, and informants. The capture of a Kingpin, a big bank robbery, or other notable current events would be displayed in form of a newspaper headline when you sign on into the game.

Will says: *I really like this idea Bobby! Who wouldn't want to create a super-hero and fight evildoers. Why not add some sim elements and concentrate on making a really detailed and functioning city, complete with intricate NPC inhabitants — "The SuperHero Sims" anyone?*

I like the idea of creating a theme for your character and deciding which attributes are "super." I think it is equally important to choose your heroes weaknesses as well. There could be some correlation — if your hero can control electricity perhaps he's vulnerable to water? Be sure to throw in some real funky, off-the-wall abilities as well!

As the player progresses through the single-player game, fighting crimes, his character's abilities (and weaknesses) can grow. Perhaps this can be reflected in his costume? The computer can keep track of the player's accomplishments and gradually introduce more difficult adversaries who exploit the hero's weaknesses. Eventually an "arch-enemy" can be created.

Multiplayer could be something like Baldur's Gate, where a small group of players work together in the city. They can form their own "Justice League"! I'd play, as long as I'm not Aquaman! Kudos.

So there you have it.

Should we be surprised as online gaming starts turning a profit that a massively multiplayer game idea would scoop the prize? Not really — especially when looking at the list of the top ideas that were presented every month. But Bobby Slade had the idea with the most creativity. Congratulations, and we'll be in touch shortly about fulfilling your prize!

MOST WANTED

Among the thousands of entries that *PC Gamer* received for the Design Lab contest, there were several popular themes that you seem to want to play. Here are some of the topics suggested the most...

BANK ROBBERS

Cops and robbers is big, and the chance for a massively multiplayer option of warring gangs and good guys was one of the most popular submissions.



Captain Indestructible

SUPERHEROES

Let's face it, there hasn't been a good superhero game in...forever. All the potential genre-busters (Bullfrog's *Indestructibles*, MicroProse's *Guardians of Justice* and even GT Interactive's *Youngblood*) failed to get released. Perhaps the popularity of these designs should tell publishing companies something.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

No doubt, Boba Fett is one of the coolest characters in movie history. Amazing numbers of you wanted to see a game where you do the dirty work (for a good cause) but with a cool sense of style.

ASSASSINS

On the flip side of the bounty hunter idea is the simple task of being a paid-for-hire assassin. There's no cool here, just cold, calculated strategy and one-shot endings.

HIGH SCHOOL

Recreate high school? Are you guys nuts? A sure sign of the life many lead, you want the fantasy of being able to court the popular cheerleader, and stomp on the jock who's always giving you a hard time

HOW TO ENTER

Describe your game idea in no more than 200 words, along the lines of the entries featured on these pages. Try not to get bogged down in specific details — your space is limited, and we're just looking for a general overview of the concept and central design. The judges will be looking for originality, the potential for a playable game and that all-around "coolness" factor. You may provide art, either computer generated or sketches/drawings, to help flesh out your ideas for us (and illustrate these pages!).

We'd prefer to receive entries via E-mail, so we've set up a special address for this contest: designlab@pcgamer.com. Send your designs along with any attached artwork. If you'd prefer to use snail-mail, the address is PC GAMER DESIGN CONTEST, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. We cannot return entries, so please do not send original artwork. Your entries will be edited for clarity and/or length.

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By submitting your game design idea to *PC Gamer*, you acknowledge that your design will become public domain — which basically means anyone can read it, take inspiration from it and use it for their own purposes. You also acknowledge that neither *PC Gamer* nor any of the companies affiliated with this contest has or will have any liability for the use of ideas submitted and/or published.

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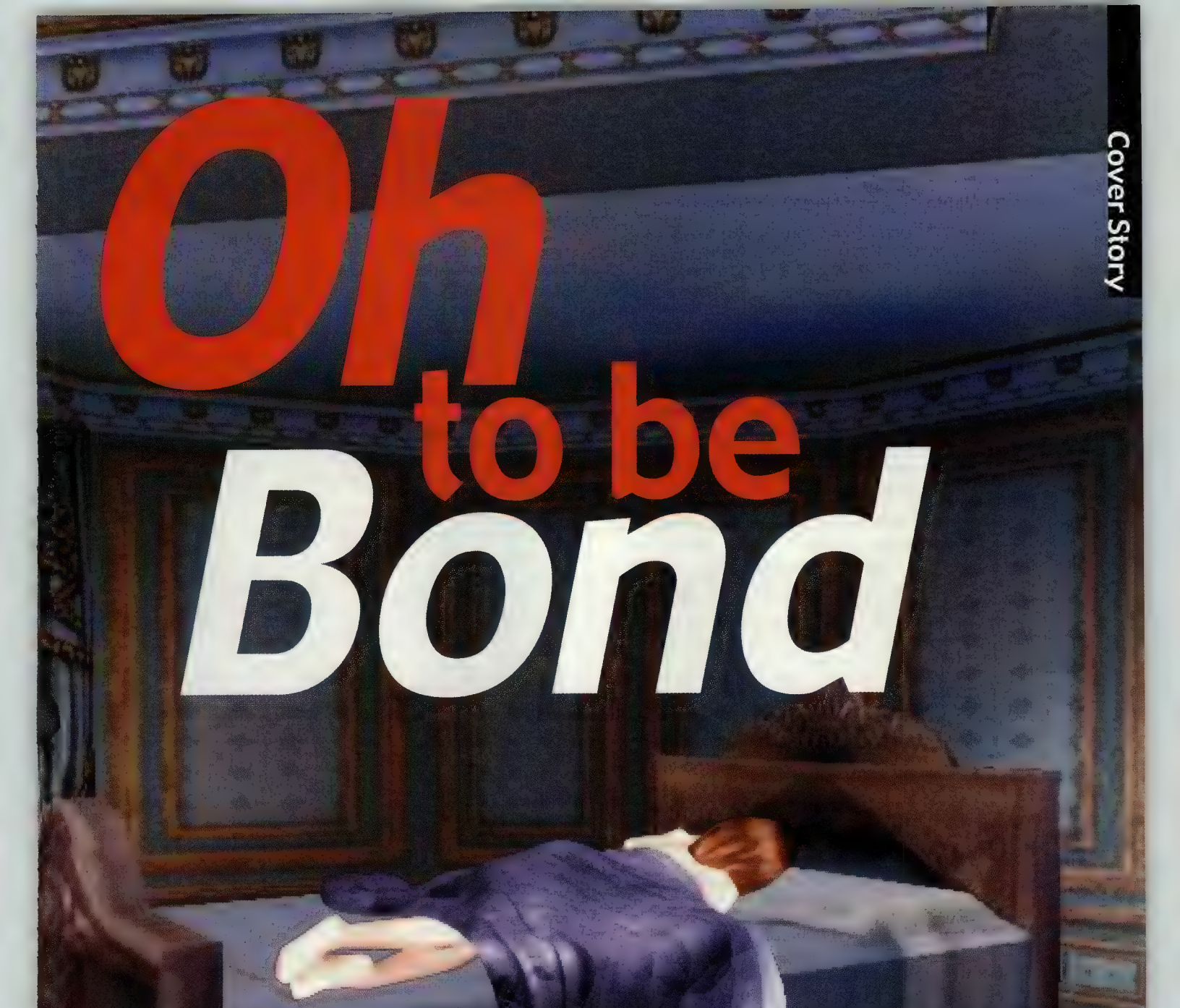


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Due to delays in the game's production, the PC version of *TWINE* did not have the levels populated with characters. Some of the images here are using the PS2 engine (which will look substantially similar to the PC version). These screens were mocked to give you a flavor of the gameplay to expect. They are a fair representation of the look to expect in the final PC version.



Oh to be Bond

James Bond is the greatest action hero in movie history. With 19 "official" movies under his belt (1967's *Casino Royale* and 1983's *Never Say Never Again* are considered "unofficial"), the books and videogames, and marketing muscle that's seen some of the world's biggest brands back the debonair spy, Bond is as powerful a franchise today as ever. Okay, so *The World Is Not Enough* (TWINE) was not an Oscar contender — Denise "Christmas Jones" Richards should stick to pool scenes (ahh, *Wild Things*) — but it still raked in nearly \$400 million worldwide in just the last two months of 1999.

Converting the franchises' success to the gaming arena garnered incredible results with *Goldeneye*, one of the few reasons to own a Nintendo 64. But TWINE won't be taking *Goldeneye*'s balls-to-the-wall action skew, bad guy-infested locales, or excessive armory (though pretty much all the weapons seen in the movie will be in the game). It's hard to argue with the position that "that's just

not Bond." For TWINE's core gameplay, you'll be engaging in "activities that inherently mean espionage," says designer Alex Mayberry. You'll be in disguise, you'll be using gadgets, you'll be skiing down mountains, and, oh yes, appreciating the marvels of the female form. So it's the Bond experience all right — it's just not all-out bullets and bazookas action, primarily because Barbara Broccoli (widow of Bond's legendary producer, Albert R., and owner of the Bond property) thinks that post-Columbine, games need to be more careful about their depictions of violence.

To be fair, Bond never walks into an encounter packing Uzis and bazookas. His trusty Walther PPK is all that's needed out of the gate — any heavier weaponry is always picked up along the way, used until it runs out of bullets, and discarded until the next action moment. Style, wit, that oh-so-English attitude, shapely babes, and the coolest gadgets known to man — that's Bond, and that's what EA's TWINE is all set to deliver.

BY ROB SMITH

Making

Movies

Seen the *TWINE* movie? Yes? Well, essentially you've seen the progression of the game, too. Starting where the movie starts, and ending where it ends ("I thought Christmas only comes once a year." Brilliant!), the game follows the plot of the movie very closely. Thankfully, the designers are able to take sufficient artistic license with how the scenes play out to ensure a compelling gameplay experience.

Nowhere is that point made more apparent than in Bilbao, the opening scene of the movie. "We needed to expand the level," says producer Ric Neil. So, Bond meets the banker, Lachaise, in the lobby of the bank, needing to get information on the dead MI6 agent (all presented through in-game engine cut scenes). Now you take over and must move through the lobby and get up to the penthouse.

This doesn't involve shootouts — it involves tapping a phone (using a "Q" branch cell phone) to find the information you need, and stunning guards with gas. By using a ventilation duct, getting on top of the elevator, and popping a couple of curious guards at the top when the doors open, you get to the first level goal with a tiny amount of gunplay, but plenty of traditional spy activities. Stealth will play an important part in some areas, with the design team considering turning the health meter into a sound detector so that you can judge how much noise you're making on different surfaces (a la *Thief*).

You'll explore fantastically detailed levels. The office building looks absolutely incredible; doors will open into rooms where NPCs bark questions about why you're barging in; the corridors will have other characters going about their business, and you'll find traditional locked-door puzzles requiring Bond-style methods of getting around them.

To that end, EA is employing the help of John Cleese, who appeared in *TWINE* in the role of R — the heir apparent to the inimitable Q (Desmond Llewelyn died in a car accident in December, 1999). Cleese will lend his voice to the game, prodding you in the right direction with pointers on how and where to use the array of over 20 gadgets. If you end up wandering around for a set time (perhaps about three minutes), R will pop in with a suggestion such as "How about looking for the telephone junction box, James" to make sure you're not stuck for long.



Shell casings will fly from the guns, and bullets will shatter glass as EA tries to ensure that the impact of the action scenes in *TWINE* are fully recreated.

Those Wonderful

Toys

One of the best traditional scenes in every Bond movie is the visit to the Q lab where Bond is outfitted with the very latest in deadly hi-tech gadgetry. Setting the style and pacing of the game early on, you'll have the chance to use the cell phone tap device to listen in on conversations, a safe decrypter, credit card lockpick, and night vision goggles. Many of these devices are used throughout the course of the game, but the piece de resistance is the x-ray glasses.

Used in the casino section, the game designers are definitely planning on letting you have as much fun with them as Bond did. "In [the casino] mission you're sneaking around Zukovsky's guys, looking at women and cheating at cards," creative director Dave Luoto

tells us gleefully. With the level of detail going into the main character models, such as Elektra, making a close inspection of her shape in fetching lingerie is a dirty job but someone will have to do it ("Barbara's [Broccoli] okay with that," confirms Neil).

The casino level also shows off some of the creative directions that the puzzles can take. "There are three different ways through [one keypad puzzle]," says Neil, "you can use the infrared glasses to see fingerprints ["and then pick the dimmest to the lightest prints to get the right combination," Luoto interjects], overhear a conversation, or use the phone tap."

Cheating at blackjack should also be plenty entertaining and is a good example of a mini-game that you have to play to earn the money necessary to progress in the plot. Here's another example: when strapped in a torture chair by Elektra, you have the credit card lockpick and can use it to get free, but you're taking damage from the shocks as you do this, thereby creating a sense of urgency. Little touches such as these should enable *TWINE* to offer a variety of gameplay styles and formats throughout its course (and thereby appeal to as wide an audience as a property of this stature requires).



Frying tonight? Other Bond gadgets include gas-filled cuff links and this tazer.

Taken For a Ride

TWINE certainly promises to change pace through its 11 missions. From the stealthy maneuvering through the bank building in the opening mission, you move on to pilot a speedy little boat on the River Thames, emerging with a splash from the MI6 building that has been faithfully recreated in amazing detail. This race will also incorporate in-game cut scenes, switching from gameplay to movie-style camera angles to capture the intensity of flying the boat through the air after hitting a ramp.

Skiing down a mountainside is a Bond staple, and the scene from *TWINE* brought up some technical issues for the design team. "Quake III is not a great outdoor engine," says Mayberry. That hasn't stopped the team from prepping a level that aims to capture the intensity of a race, combined with the gunplay necessary to down enemy "parahawks." Later in the game, the seemingly mundane issue of racing on a "pig" down the narrow pipeline doesn't seem to offer much gameplay entertainment — but add in another "pig" with bad guys, and the timer that Miss Christmas is working against, and suddenly it's a challenge. The pipeline itself had just been polished with a metallic shading effect and it looked great, reflecting skies that likewise were incredibly realistic.

Of course, Bond is nothing without his car. BMW's heavy branding deal includes this game, so you'll get to drive the Z8 in a very limited fashion (just forward and backward on the rickety dock walkways). But the car's arsenal of rockets come in handy for dealing with buzzing choppers that are immune to standard weapon fire. In this same conflict, the puzzle and dazzle effects have to be scripted together to match the movie, taking away some dynamic gameplay: Bond has to shoot a gas pipe and then fire a flare that ignites in a fireball, engulfing the chopper and bringing it down. Sure, it's going to look great,

but seeing the helicopter hover dumbly, waiting for its doom, isn't going to present much of a challenge.

There *will* be moments of manic gunplay, however. Neil confessed that some of the early missions might have to be adjusted to add action content. That's not going to be a problem in some areas, particularly a villa that looks fantastic and has plenty of evil henchmen to "dispatch with extreme prejudice," according to Luoto. With bullets flying (and leaving different marks on different surfaces) the Bond action experience will still be intact.

PC vs PS2

The company mandate is PS2 above everything else," says Ric Neil, producer of the PC and PS2 versions of *TWINE*. Ignoring the comedy value in that corporate policy (PC gamers rest easy — a movie of *Metal Gear Solid 2* was the only PS2



Straight from the movie: the river chase...



...the casino (with those x-ray glasses)...



...and avoiding grenades from parahawks.

title of any real note at E3), it makes a real difference in *TWINE*'s development. Initially slated for release by the end of 2000, the PC version has now been pushed to early 2001 and it's all PS2's fault. The core hold-up was having to rewrite completely the 3D renderer for the PS2 version, "we're still discovering what the box can do," explains Neil, "and we're restrained by memory."

That said, the PS2 version of the game will add solid detail to the game worlds by using the new console's ability to show more polygons on screen. The polygon deficit will be made up on the PC version by the larger available texture size, which will allow higher resolutions and more detail. It also appears that *TWINE*'s PC level designers have time to kill (or get in extra practice, depending how you look at it), since they released a collection of 12 *Quake III* maps recently — "all created outside work hours," they claim (or maybe they cooked them up while waiting for the PS2 problems to be resolved).



The "pig" scene in the movie has been enhanced for the game, throwing in a few henchmen who need to be despatched while Christmas works her nuclear magic.



Win cool Bond stuff (but not a BMW)

Will a *TWINE* jacket do instead? How about the jacket, plus a copy of the DVD, a T-shirt, and baseball cap? That package of Bond goodness is going to the first prize winner of this little contest. One runner-up will receive the DVD, T-shirt, and cap, and more runners-up will be receiving the *TWINE* movie

on good old-fashioned VHS. And to have any chance of scoring this bag of loot, all you need do is send your name and address to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with the words James Bond in the subject line. For the rules and regulations and all that legal mumbo-jumbo nobody cares about, see page 40.

Bond means Babes



In a reversal of the usual American stand on violence and sex (violence okay, sexuality bad), EA is downplaying the gunplay for *TWINE*, though sexy ladies are A-okay. Aside from the principal characters of Elektra and Christmas, there will be plenty of other fine female figures. In fact, ensuring that the game does capture Bond's movie character, one cut scene will introduce Bond at the side of Elektra's bed, straightening his tie. Style elements like this *must* make the final cut, though everything has to get the blessing of Broccoli's company and MGM before being set in stone.

The 54 people working on the project makes this EA's biggest team ever. Is this testimony to EA's commitment to the PS2 platform or to the Bond franchise? "Both," says Jon Horsley, executive producer for the franchise, "but it's mainly down to the content requirement for all these angles. We

want to appeal to the game player — not the film viewer."

It's a shame that the PC version is being held up while the PS2 issues are ironed out, but that could be a good thing for content, as Ric Neil confirmed that "spy versus spy" and CTF modes of multiplayer will be included. And having seen the early build working on the PS2 and the PC, the limitations of low TV resolutions were evident, as the PC version was far crisper.

Though we're going to have to wait until early 2001 before *TWINE* is finished on both platforms, it looks like there will be a greatly varied spy caper at the end of it. "The breadth of Bond is very great — there are ski chases, casinos, shootouts — and this presents a problem in working on all that content, but the possibilities of that breadth are tremendous," says Horsley. Absolutely...and so long as we get to say "Martini. Shaken, not stirred" just once, then we'll be happy.



A gratuitous Denise Richards picture.

PCG



Unlike the movie, where one card wins \$1 million, playing a blackjack mini-game pushes the plot. The x-ray glasses will help you cheat and see the next card.

Engine's Ready

Using the *Quake III* engine immediately gives *TWINE* a head start in the looks department. The EA team has taken the core code and added many new elements: skeletal animation (including 15 different body zones for characters, front and back), a particle system that will be showcased in explosions, fountains, and bullet hits, and a text-based scripting language (unlikely to be made available to the mod community — "We

haven't figured out how to make it available, but most of the team wants to do it," confirms Neil). What's likely to have more visual impact is the detail in the facial animations that are planned. Each character will have a dozen or so facial movements including eyebrow raising and squints as well as the mouth movements matching the voice work.



Escaping this chair will be a mini-game.

The Real James Bond

James Bond first came to print in Ian Fleming's 1952 novel, *Casino Royale*. The spy's name was taken from the author of a book on "Birds of the West Indies," and Fleming picked it because he wanted something dull — not the typical dime-novel hero name.



Ian Fleming

Fleming's own life was as intriguing as the legendary spy he created. After working as a journalist, he realized that there was no money in that gig (*ain't that the truth* — Ed.) and moved into banking before suddenly taking a job for *The Times* newspaper in Russia. This move suggested that he was working as a spy at this time — despite the fact that he had failed the entrance exam to enter the Foreign Office years earlier. He rose to Commander in Naval Intelligence through the course of WWII.

His way with words led him to pen notes to William Donovan, who set up the OSS, the forerunner to the CIA. As a token

of thanks, Fleming was given a gun engraved with "For Special Services" (later to become the title of one of his books).

Many Bond characteristics were semi-autobiographical, with Fleming adept with the ladies, and comfortable living the high life. After the war he built a house in Jamaica, which he called Goldeneye. Fleming died as a result of a heart attack in 1964, at aged 55.

Despite his fame as Bond's creator, Ian Fleming also penned the children's story about a flying car, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.



Connors Potts

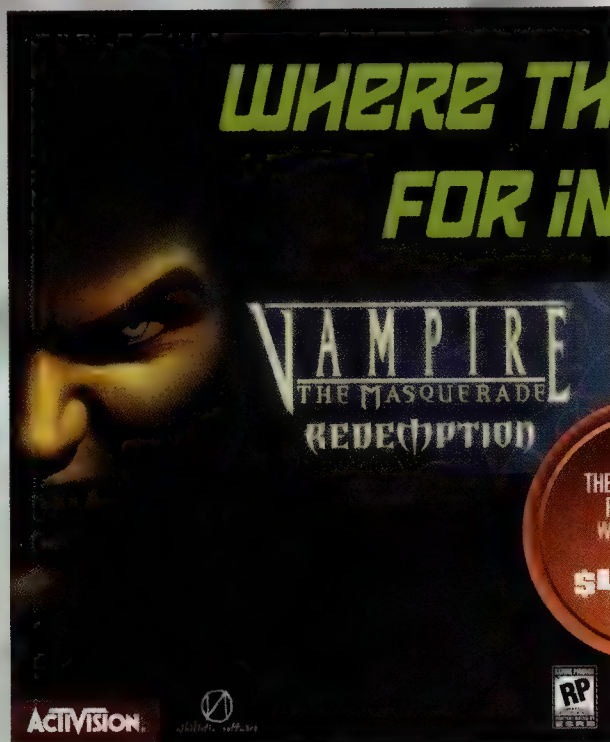


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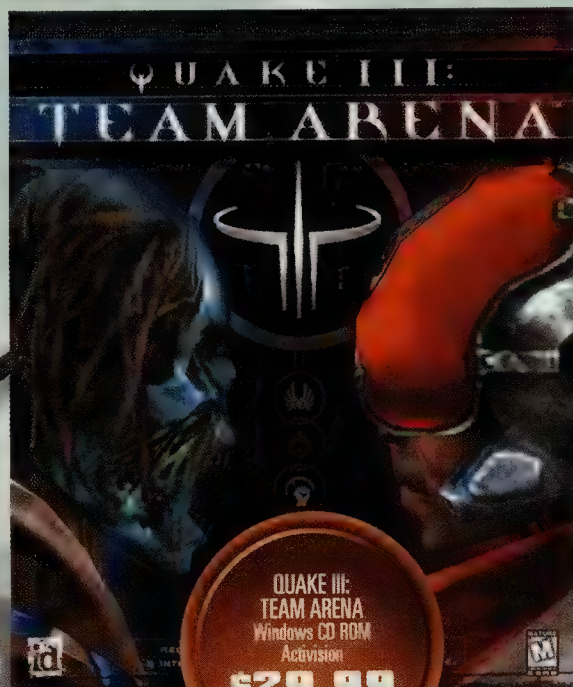
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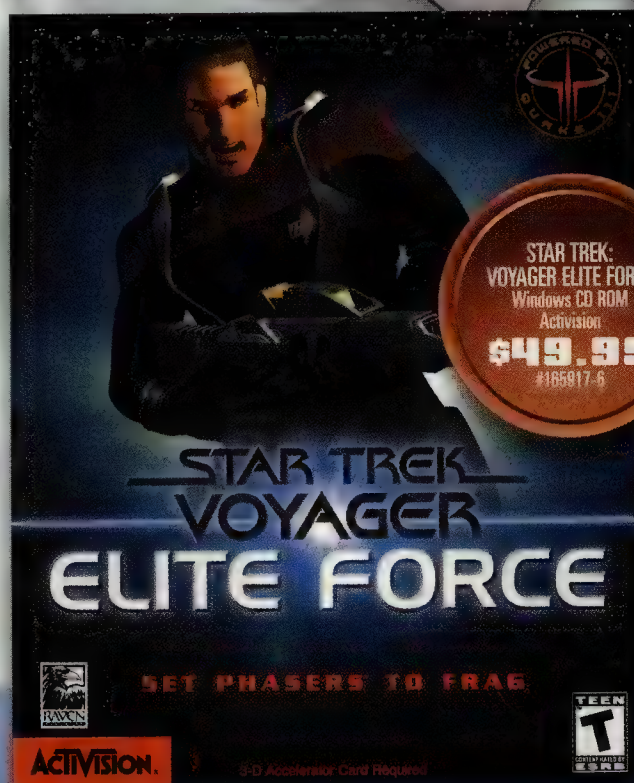
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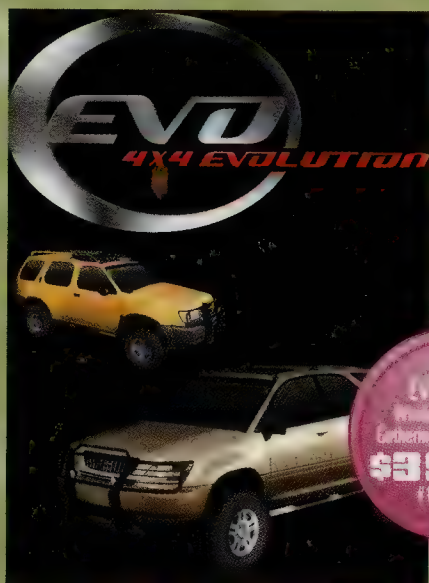
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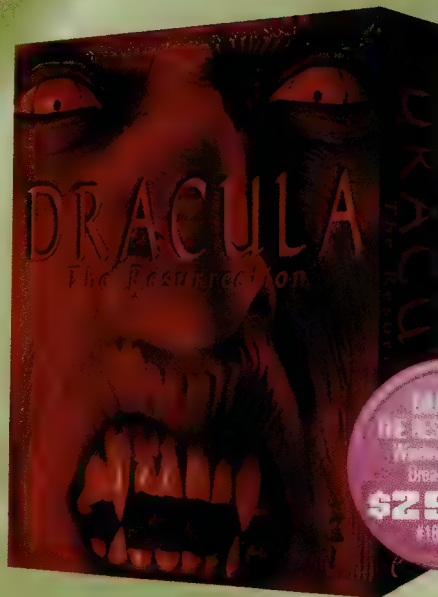
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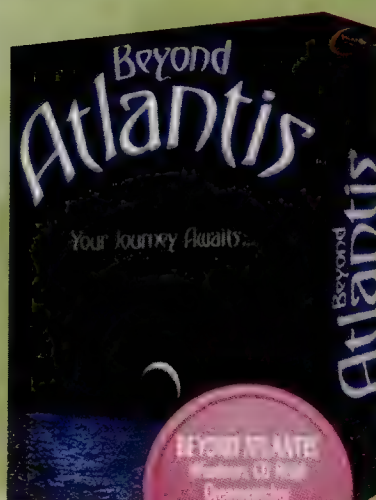
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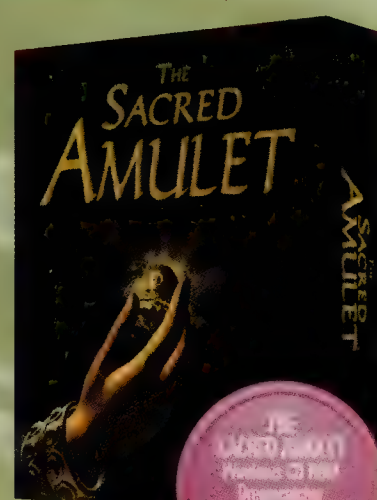
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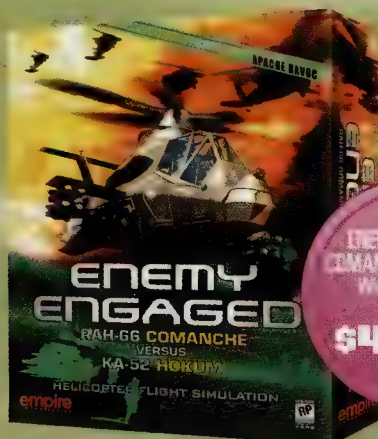


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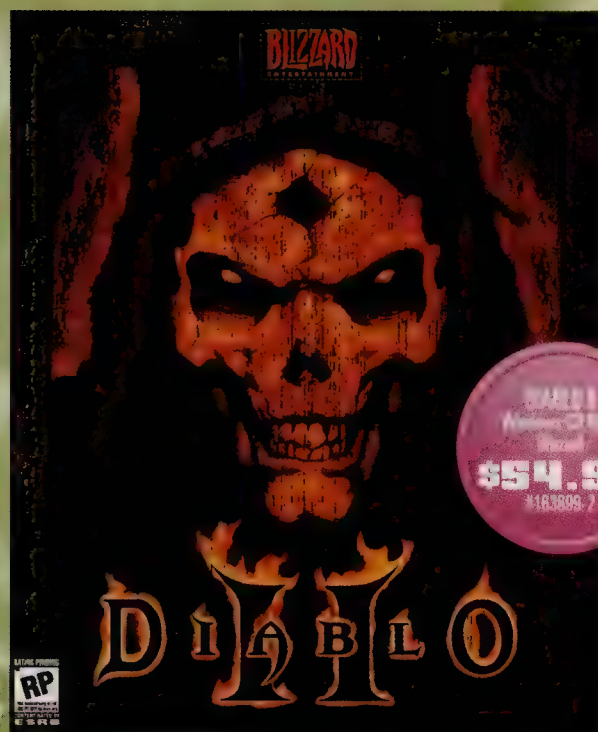
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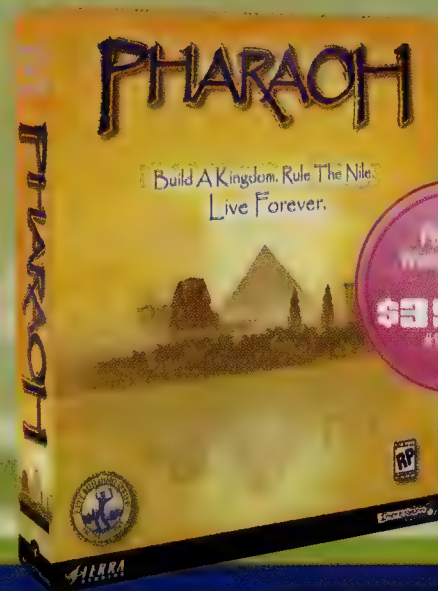
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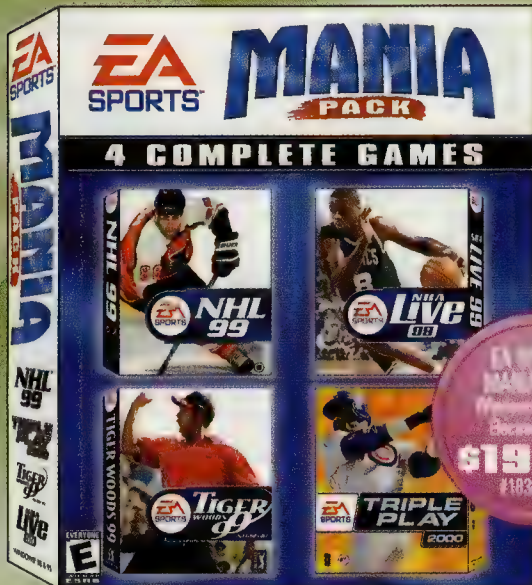
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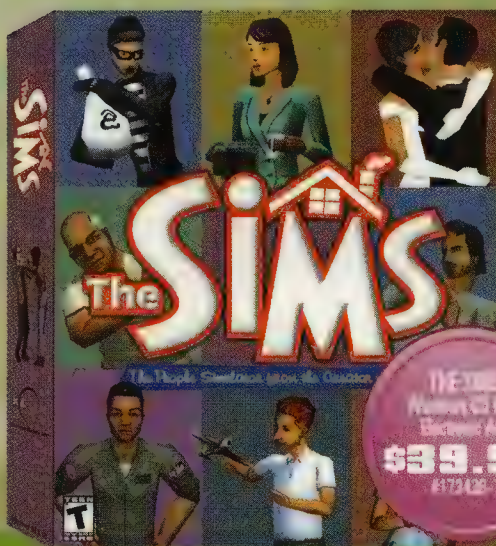
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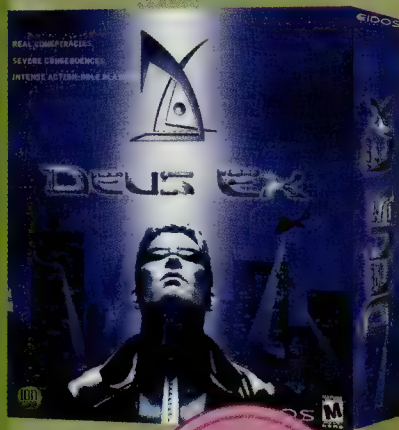
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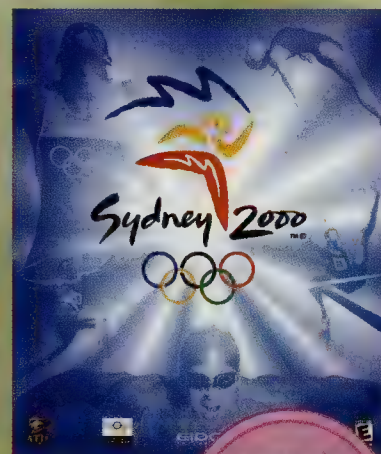
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Opportunities abound. The PC Gamer mailbag is constantly overflowing with eager tykes wanting to know how to get in to the game biz. Who doesn't want to get paid for something that they already do as a hobby? Now, more than ever before, enterprising individuals are grasping for the American PC gaming dream. Invigorated by a wide variety of game styles, and with freeform online communities providing a friendly forum for support, gamers are getting involved in their hobby, and getting paid for the privilege.

By accident, vague design, or flat-out ambition, these gamers are adding some coin to the ol' bank account. Not always a ton, mind you — a lot depends on the winding path of your gaming obsession. In some cases, it's down to the risks you're willing to take. Risks, you say? Well, yes. Sometimes you end up moving on from a good day job to follow your gaming muse. Or, in the case of people trading *EverQuest* or *Ultima Online* items for cold hard American cash, they court getting bounced permanently from the games.

Really, did anyone realize the impact that some of these games would make? I'm not talking millions in royalties for the

developers, but the thousands of employment opportunities that fans stumbled into as the hobby exploded. A deferential doffing of the hat is in order to *Doom*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, and *Quake* — all of which contributed way more to the gaming community than hours of gaming pleasure.

These games created the chance for opportunistic gamers to make money doing stuff you were doing just for the fun of it. And that's not too shabby, eh? Especially when you consider the amount of time you can spend on games or game-related activities. If you're going to do it anyway, getting paid never hurts. So, let's meet some people who are in greener gaming pastures.

BY DON ST. JOHN



In a country where Doritos chips feature *StarCraft* characters, it's no surprise that Korea is also where the hardest of the hardcore pro players can be found.

NERVES OF STEEL, REFLEXES OF GOLD

Mark Larsen was a 10-year-old playing a lot of games a few years back with hours invested in *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake*. Typically enough, as *Quake* ushered in the online play revolution, he jumped in. "I met a bunch of people over the 'net," Larsen says, and he hooked up with some clans. Eventually, he and his buddies decided to hit a LAN event in Washington, D.C. Con, where "we got killed, but had a lot of fun."

By this time, Larsen says, he was playing a lot, and when he caught wind of the Ground Zero tournament in New York, he thought he might be good enough to enter. A few mild parental

arguments later, he entered with two weeks to spare.

Good call: Larsen, playing as Wombat, took home the tournament's \$10,000 first prize. Not bad for someone who's headed for his junior year in high school in Roselle, IL, eh? And that's been the case for plenty of other players who've joined the pro ranks as outfits like the Cyberathletes Professional League and the Professional Gamers League have sprung into being. (And, in the case of the PGL, sprung back out.)

Tournament play has also led to other opportunities for some gamers. Kornelia Takacs, a brutally efficient *Quake* player who's a regular on the CPL circuit, has done guest appearances at the GameSpy booth at the past two E3 shows. The top players have been courted for endorsements for a variety of gaming peripherals, getting couriered around the country to different events, and collecting a modest pay packet for the privilege (reputedly worth in the region of \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year for the top seeds).

OVERSEAS COMPETITION

It's not just here in America, either: The CPL has since started outlets in Europe and Asia, and the mania in South Korea for *StarCraft* has opened up opportunities for gamers there as well.

Guillaume Patry and Jerome Rioux have certainly found that out. The two Quebec natives, still in their late teens, have moved to Korea to ply their trade as *StarCraft* pros. "This is really the only place where I could do this and make the kind of money that's available here," says Patry, who's been in Seoul for nine months now. "I play about three hours a day, but that's between tournaments; there've been as many as two or three a week." Patry's winnings? "Not too bad," he says, grinning. We'll say: Patry, whose handle is X'Ds-Grrrr..., scored \$12,500 for a second-place finish in the Korean Sports Seoul tournament, as well as \$10,000 for topping the battle.net *Brood Wars* championship. *StarCraft* developer Blizzard sponsored a Korean tournament at the beginning of the year with prize money near \$34,000, including an \$8,300 pot for the winner; their Korean tournament partner, KBK, has also sponsored a number of tournaments to promote its growing chain of game rooms.

"It's sure different from Quebec," says Rioux, who plays as {s}Thor and, like Patry, went over to South Korea at the beginning of the year to participate in tournaments. "But it's such a great opportunity, and we really like the people we've met over here."



Mark Larsen, a.k.a. Wombat, scored the \$10,000 top prize at Ground Zero NYC last year.

Of course, they didn't expect that they'd be friends with a movie star. But that's the case for Ki-Seok Lee, better known to Korean *StarCraft* fans as Ssamzang. Lee is currently turning his prowess as a *StarCraft* wiz into a role in a Korean movie loosely based on the *StarCraft* phenomenon. "It's amazing how this has developed," says Ssamzang, who has a huge following among Korean youth who rabidly track the latest *StarCraft* developments. "It's nothing I planned, and I'm just seeing what happens next," he says. "But it all comes from the game; I always remember to keep that as my focus."

Focus is what ends up being the watchword for pros. Larsen, who was the 1999 CPL champion, puts in serious time when he's gearing up for a tournament. "I play a few hours a day, every day, and in the summer that probably goes up to five to six hours," he says. Rioux cites a similar schedule: "When I'm not in a tournament, I still do a few hours every day, just to keep up."

Does that kill the fun? Hah. "I still enjoy it a lot," says Larsen.

IT'S MOD TO DO LEVELS

Robin Walker had a problem, if you can call it that, not uncommon to many hardcore gamers. "I didn't really do anything else," he says, laughing. "I probably spent way too much time playing games. I played the same ones as everybody else: *Doom*, *Duke*, and then when *Quake* came out, that was it."

Working as a contract programmer for NEC in his native Australia, Walker and his friends John Cook and Ian Caughley had another idea: to do a total conversion for *Quake* that they decided to call *Team Fortress*. "We had the idea to do something that would involve command points, that would end up being kind of a two-on-two *Doom* level," Walker says. So the three hacked out the original *TF*, with Caughley dropping out a while later and leaving the effort to Walker and Cook. Meanwhile, they were getting so much feedback from quickly addicted players that they formed a small company, simultaneously modifying *TF* and planning a second version.

You know the rest of this story, right? Today, the pair is still doing *TF*...but as employees at Valve Software, which liked their work so much that they swallowed the pair's firm and put them onto *Team Fortress for Half-Life*. Walker and Cook are perhaps the classic example of hobby work that turns into an industry-level job. It was hardly planned, but it became apparent that *TF* could lead to something cool, says Walker. "We felt that if we kept working on *Team Fortress*, something good would happen," he says. "It was a lot of work, and it still is." Those hours can turn in to lucrative salaries. A lead programmer at a prominent company can expect to make in excess of \$100,000 a year, with bonuses on top.

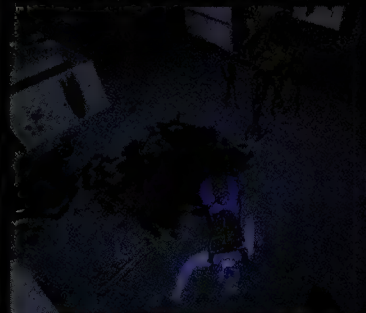
But is it better than contract programming in the corporate world? "Completely! I'm having so much fun. I'd never go back to that," says Walker.



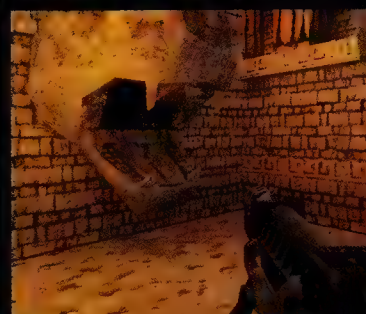
Robin Walker's work on the original *Team Fortress* (inset) has taken him to the creation of *Team Fortress 2* for Valve.

MAKING MODS

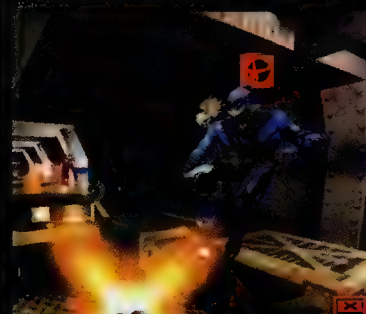
Mod making and level design requires incredible dedication, as well as tremendous talent. With hundreds of gamers trying out game editors, the designers who get noticed are the ones with real flair and polish in their products.



Neil Manke's *USS Darkstar* for *Half-Life* is as intense as the original game.



An incredible amateur-to-pro story is embodied in the creation of *Gunman*.



Weapons Factory Arena brings the essence of *TF* to the *Quake III* engine.



Stephane Roncada turns his pro circuit involvement into level design for *MM2*.



Half-Life 2 further cements PC Gamer's reputation as a design guru, Neil Manke, as one of the most talented "amateur" designers in the business.

PRACTICAL SKILLS = JOBS

Happy accidents have happened to any number of mod, level, and TC designers whose work has caught the eye of developers and publishers in the industry, even when that completely wasn't the goal. Jack Davis is a designer working on Activision's *Dark Reign 2* at Pandemic Studios; a few years ago, he was a college student and part-time music instructor who had no plan whatsoever to get into the games industry.

That changed when his work on *Quake II* single-play levels attracted some attention. "I'd been playing with editors back through *Doom* and *Duke*, and with *Quake II*, I did some stuff that I really put some thought and work into," Davis says. "When I distributed it on the 'net, I started getting some e-mails back. A lot, in fact."

"I started fiddling with the editors so I could get more gameplay from the games." — Neil Manke

The attention led to offers to work on add-on packs; his first pro job came with the first *SiN* add-on, *Wages of SiN*. Before Davis knew it, he had a job, "I ended up at Eight Cylinders, for about eight weeks until the game I was working on got canceled," he says. "But then I heard from Pandemic, and now I'm having a great time."

For Stephane Roncada, his story is a total merger of his real life and his level-building activities. The French native is a pro motocross racer who's

on the regular tour here in America, and along the way, he got hooked on *Motocross Madness*. "It's such a cool game; it completely had the feel of the real thing, and I should know," Roncada says.

With an interest in pursuing computing in his spare time, Roncada started to use *Motocross Madness*' level editor to do his own courses. When Robb Rinard, lead designer on *MM2* at developer Rainbow Studios saw these, he contacted Roncada and eventually hired him to design all the Supercross tracks for *MM2*. Was Roncada stoked? "Completely. I've been playing games since I was little, and I always wondered how you make a game," he says. "I was just having fun with my tracks, and now I've learned so much from working with the *MM2* guys." So much so, in fact, that he hopes to make game and level design his life after motocross. "I can't do that forever," he says.

So, is there any mod-maker who's making a living from this without joining a company? Well, Neil Manke is that rarity. Manke is the talent behind the immensely popular *PC Gamer Presents: They Hunger* conversions for *Half-Life* (TH2 is on the PC Gamer CD). Without ever landing at a company, he makes a living he calls "modest" but comfortable. "Hey, my house is paid for," he says, shrugging. "So that's one reason I can afford to do it."

Manke's former day job was as a carpenter, and he says that was just a job, nothing more. "I always loved games, and I would never play a game over and over; when I was done, I'd

move to the next one," he says. "So I started fiddling around with the editors on various games so I could get more gameplay out of them."

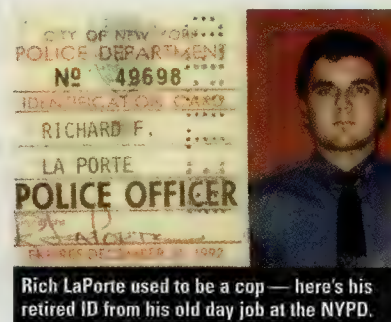
That turned into a variety of mods and add-ons for such games as *Quake* and *Soldier of Fortune*, but Manke says *Half-Life* and *TFC* are the best ones for him to work with. "Valve has managed it so well," he says, "they really support their gaming community."

THE TANGLED WEB

Rich LaPorte has been sitting for a while. The former New York City police officer sustained an on-duty injury that's left him permanently disabled, and he had to endure nine operations in the aftermath. Beyond family support, he credits one thing in particular with helping him endure that period: "Games got me through that. No question," he says.

LaPorte, a longtime hardcore gamer in several genres, got wondering when games were coming out, and he couldn't always find a ready answer. So, with some free time and an interest in learning Web design, he decided to start a site in the summer of 1998 devoted to tracking the release dates for PC games. Today, *GoneGold.com* is considered an authority for finding out when that eagerly awaited title is ready for the shelves. (It's where *PC Gamer* gets its release list from, for instance.)

For LaPorte, that's a totally unplanned surprise. "It snowballed. I envisioned this as a one-page thing," he says. "But people started asking for



Rich LaPorte used to be a cop — here's his retired ID from his old day job at the NYPD.



LaPorte now keeps busy with *GoneGold.com*, a site he started himself.

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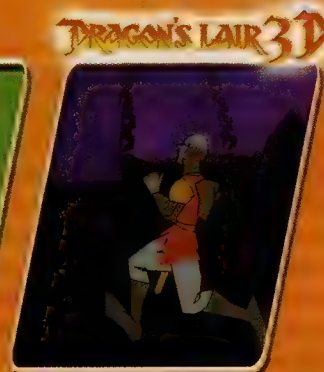
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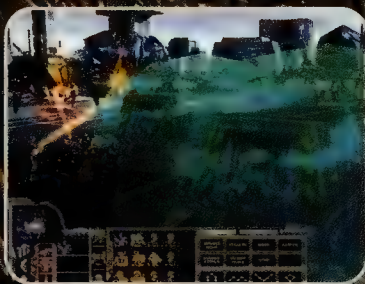
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more stuff, and I just kept going with it and getting more help from the fans." His forced retirement and the resultant disability pension have allowed him to put serious time in, and GoneGold has grown into a site that attracts advertising and what LaPorte terms a surprisingly steady deal from CompuExpert, the site's retail affiliate.

The Web site that becomes a going concern is an ongoing trend, and many of the likes of Blue's News and Old Man Murray have become must-sees in the world of gaming. And the ante is going up pretty seriously: Just take *MegaGames.com*, which over the summer scored a \$12 million sale for 20-year-old founder Harsha Jayasekera. But LaPorte says that keeping the original focus is what gives running a site its flavor. "I do this because I like it, and because it's a nice way to give back to the people who support this," he says. "And I just like knowing when something's going to come out."

WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR...HANDLE

You might think that a LAN gaming center would face an uncertain market, what with the popularity of clan-driven LAN parties on one side and the growth of broadband gaming methods like cable modems and DSL on the other. So why do it?

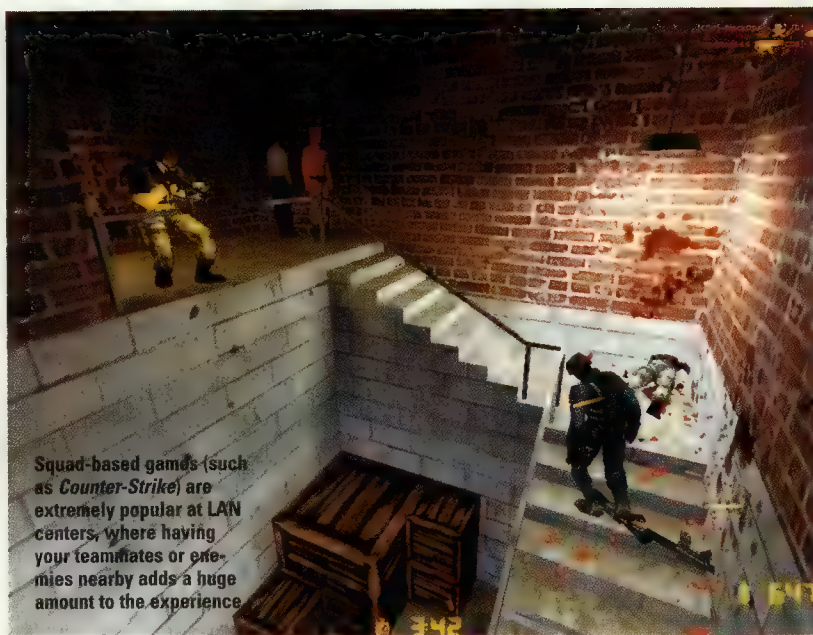
THE TALL DOLLARS



What kind of money can you make as a pro gamer? Well, if you've got the skills to compete in the Cyberathlete Professional League's upcoming Babbage's \$100,000 Event in Dallas, Texas, Dec. 14-17, you could get your shot at the following placement prizes:

Babbage's CPL \$100,000 Tournament

1	\$25,000	8	\$3,000
2	\$15,000	9-12	\$1,500
3	\$10,000	13-16	\$1,000
4	\$7,500	17-24	\$600
5	\$6,500	25-32	\$400
6	\$5,000	33-64	\$200
7	\$4,000	65+	Squat



Squad-based games (such as *Counter-Strike*) are extremely popular at LAN centers, where having your teammates or enemies nearby adds a huge amount to the experience.

"Because people love to go hang out," says Jerry Staton, who co-owns Shockwave Gaming Center in Granite City, IL, not far from St. Louis. "It's a place to go. And you can't really laugh at your buddy after you've fragged him unless he's sitting right there."

Staton and his nephew, Victor Perez, are betting that there are enough gaming addicts to support Shockwave's business, open since last September. And it is a business: Building a viable business takes a careful balance of budgets and necessities, such as rent on the center's lease, computer maintenance, competition, and staying on top of the newest games. That's not to mention a funky marketing plan, given the center's young demograhic. "I don't think they read the papers too much," Staton says. "We find that most of our business is word of mouth."

That growing buzz is doing the job, though, and Staton says that people who come in generally come back. "It's a lot easier playing a huge game of *Counter-Strike* if it's all set up for you," he says. "And fortunately, once we get 'em, it seems that they're hooked." Starting the center was Perez's idea, Staton says, but for him it was a natural crossover from his former day gig doing computer upgrades: "I built all the machines here," he says. And LAN party experience convinced him that people would always want the chance to play together when they could.

Surprisingly, Staton doesn't fear broadband too much. "We're starting to get cable modems in the area, but the service isn't always reliable, and it's



Retail chains and publishers use LAN centers to help promote new releases such as *Evolve*.

not the same thing anyway," he says. "We're finding that we have a lot of people who do both — play over CMs and then come in here because they want the social aspect."

As for money? "We're getting there. It takes time to build this sort of business," Staton says. "And it has to be profitable. But we're growing."

NOT QUITE A FREE MARKET

In 17th-century Holland, a strange fad erupted: people were buying and selling tulips on a scale that would rival a Donald Trump purchase today. Yes, that's right — tulips. As in flowers. There was even a stock market for tulips, which eventually crashed and wiped lots of people out.

Sound silly? Well, any sillier than a thriving market in *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online* items? Because that's certainly one way that gamers have found themselves making some excellent coin these days — by auctioning key EQ and UO items on eBay.

Some accounts have been sold on eBay for several thousand dollars. For an increasing number of players, trading this way is turning in to a job.

eBay trade is not just about playing and selling. Middle-men have emerged, buying items from players in the game, then selling them online.

"eBay for me is definitely worth it; I've made about \$3,000 in the past month, and that's just selling off my account without any active playing," says "prexus99," a regular on eBay auctions for EverQuest items — what kind of name is "prexus99," anyway? Well, it's a pseudonymous one that won't get him kicked out of the game; Verant, which runs EverQuest, has made selling items in the real world an offense punishable with a ban. Hey, we did mention there were risks to these endeavors.

For the daring, it can be worth it, though; EQ monsters only dump choice items at sporadic intervals, and usually in out-of-the-way places like deep dungeons. Coming up with the one you really, really, really want can be tough if you have to spend your time living a real life. Inevitably, the rarest items command high premiums.

"The most I've gotten per a single item was \$450," says prexus99.

Why buy these accoutrements of power, anyway? "For one thing, it can be really tedious waiting to get these things," says "Bob," another regular EQ item seller. "To be sure you can get something really rare can take a lot of camping, or you have to be really lucky. For some people, doing it this way really lets them enjoy the game without having to spend all that time."

Bob says he's a semi-regular on the eBay auction scene, and he's doing well. "It's nothing I'm making a living on, but there are people who do, and the money is pretty good," he says. "I've been doing this for six months, and I've made more than \$2,000 so far. It's nice extra money."

There are those who make it their job, so to speak, and "Jimmy" is one of those. "I don't really play too much

anymore — maybe once in a while if I'm in the mood," he says. "But mostly I'm in there working. It's too good not to — you wind up thinking, 'Hey, I could be making money here.'"

THE DARKSIDE

Are there any drawbacks to scoring money in the industry? For some, yes. If you've turned your love of gaming into a job, what you inevitably have is...a job. And like everyone, there are days when you'd just rather not go to work. "I play some other games like Counter-Strike and StarCraft when I can," says Larsen. "But then my dad will actually say sometimes, 'You should be practicing Quake III.' Y'know, because there is a lot of money involved."

"EverQuest was fun when I started, but for a long while now it has been extremely boring — basically like a job in most respects," says prexus99. The need to camp for long, tedious hours to get the choicest items can rob the game of its elementary fun, he says.

Bob agrees, but says he's chosen to strike a balance. "It can literally take days — both in the game and in real life — to get some things; it can really be boring to do," he says. "I decided to take a back-seat approach and make sure I made the game more enjoyable. When I have anything left over, that's when I put it up on eBay, and that's often enough that I do okay."

Even when you have to show up to work, though, it's revolving around games, and for most people that's fine. "One of my bios said that I wanted to make mods for the rest of my life," says Walker. "And I get to do this every day with incredibly talented, cool people." For some, the old cliché works just fine: Do what you love, and the money will follow.

A first level EverQuest character is kitted out with incredible items. Either "twinked" from another character, or bought for cold hard cash, this kind of trading is starting to unbalance gameplay.

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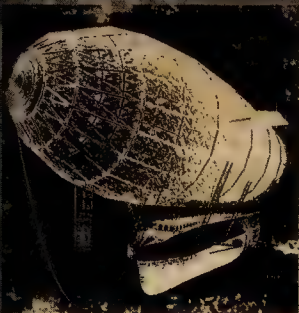
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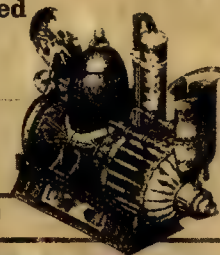
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Up in Smoke

The offices of *PC Gamer* can be an unpredictable place. But for two and a half years now, one constant has always been the curmudgeonly presence of our beloved "Smoke," Rob Smolka.

Alas, all good things must come to an end, and so it is with the tenure of our senior editor. Smoke is headed downstairs to help launch a new *Imagine* magazine called *T3* (Tomorrow's Technology Today) as its managing editor.

So join us in a reflective moment to scan some of the more memorable highlights of Smoke's watch:

- Smoke shakes his head unimpressed as over two years' worth of games are brought in for demos.
- Smoke shakes his head unimpressed as Morris returns from the lunch run with yet another botched McDonald's order.
- Smoke nods his head approvingly as Jeremy returns from the

lunch run with yet another perfectly executed McDonald's order.

- Smoke writes fourteen consecutive Point After columns about *High Heat Baseball*.
- Smoke refuses to participate in any 3D shooter LAN matches, claiming seasickness. But he once worked for a steamship line!
- Smoke consumes, given an estimated rate of two cheeseburgers and one order of nuggets per day, 1,400 cheeseburgers and 8,200 Chicken McNuggets over the course of his time with the magazine.



The grizzled, hard-bitten former steamshipman has a soft side, though, and his sardonic wit and relentless misanthropy are merely the varnish on one of the magazine industry's true professionals. He's an original, and we'd be nuts to lose him completely — which is why you can continue to look forward to his column and reviews.

So good luck, Smolka the Hutt: you can't be replaced, or even contained.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review in this issue, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

NEW AND IMPROVED RATING SYSTEM

Only the greatest should be rewarded with our coveted Editors' Choice award, and this tweak to the rating system reflects that. Now, at a glance at the score box on each page, you can see where the game fits in to the great gaming scheme of quality.

100%–90% EDITORS' CHOICE

We're battenning down the hatches and limiting our coveted Editors' Choice Award to games that score a 90 or higher. It's not easy to get here, and darn near impossible to get near 100. Games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation, an unreserved must-buy score.

89%–80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your purchase, and is likely a great example of its genre. This is also a scoring range where we might reward specialist/niche games that are real breakthroughs in their own way.

79%–70% GOOD

These are pretty good games, which we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, although it's a safe bet there are probably better options out there.

69%–60% ABOVE AVERAGE

A reasonable, above-average game. It might be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that limit its appeal.

59%–50% MERELY OKAY

Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but there are likely numerous better places to spend your gaming dollar.

49%–40% TOLERABLE

Poor quality. Only a few slightly redeeming features keep it from falling into the abyss of the next category.

39%–0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible. And the lower you go, the more worthless you get. Avoid these titles like the plague, and don't say we didn't warn you!

GAME OF THE MONTH

Each issue, we select a very special game as Game of the Month. This is reserved for the product that most completely captured our hearts and minds. To earn this mark, your game can't merely be Editors' Choice quality...that's a given. We're looking for something spectacular. And for this issue, the winner is...

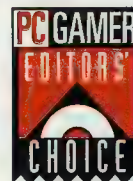


DEUS EX



p.82

EDITORS' CHOICE



Every month, we honor the best games we see with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

COMBAT MISSION



p.106

EARTH 2150



p.110

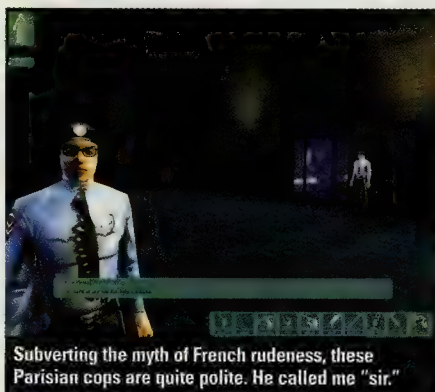
Deus Ex



Ambitious, assured, and awesome...*Deus Ex* is a game guaranteed to please just about everybody.

Go buy this game. That's all I really have to say about *Deus Ex*. A whole bunch of "Go buy this game." I'll run on about its depth, innovative design, atmosphere, and all that stuff, but the bottom line is this: Get it.

Deus Ex began its life as another tremendous game idea in the head of Warren Spector. That's not such a big deal — a tremendous game idea runs through his head



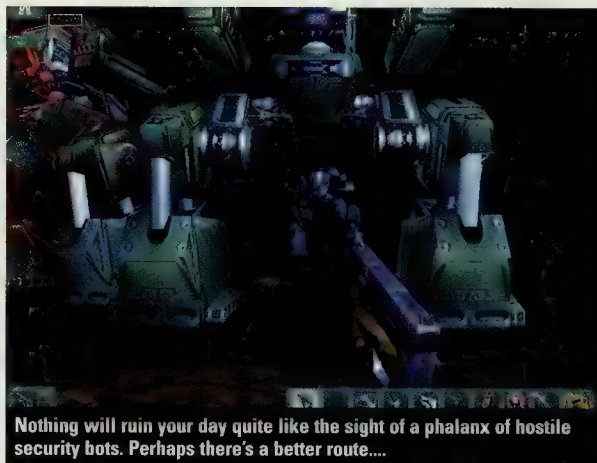
Subverting the myth of French rudeness, these Parisian cops are quite polite. He called me "sir."

every single day. But this one stuck in his noggin for some reason, and it got sketched out into a design doc. And from there it was sent into full-fledged production in the Austin wing of ION Storm. And for a couple of years, Spector and his team worked with complete freedom, well out of the ION Storm limelight, just plugging away at their game.

And now it's here, and it's fantastic.

The game looks and plays a lot like *System Shock 2*, which of course derived from Spector's own *System Shock*. A first-person 3D game rendered with the *Unreal* engine, its graphics are on par with the best of last year's action games, but *Deus Ex* isn't a game intended for accelerator-monkeys. Its emphasis is squarely on story and character development.

You are J.C. Denton (that's your code name, anyway, and it's how everyone will refer to you throughout the game). You've just been inducted into UNATCO (United Nations Anti-Terrorism Committee) as a badass special agent, working for the same agency that employs your equally badass brother Paul. Your broad charge is to wield the committee's unilateral power to fight a terrorist cell calling itself the National Secessionist Forces (NSF). As a bizarre



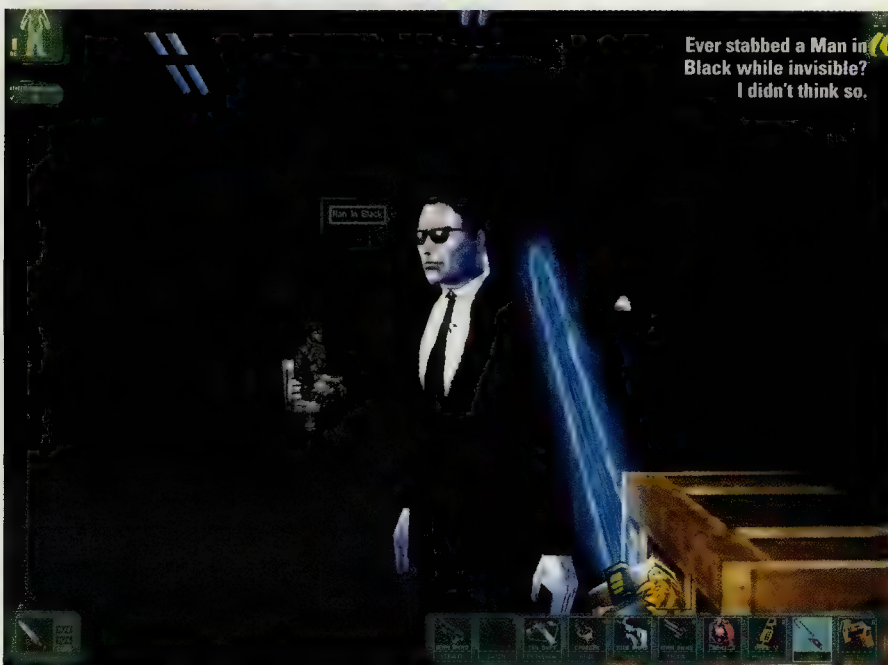
Nothing will ruin your day quite like the sight of a phalanx of hostile security bots. Perhaps there's a better route....

plague ravages the populace, the NSF is hijacking shipments of the antidote.

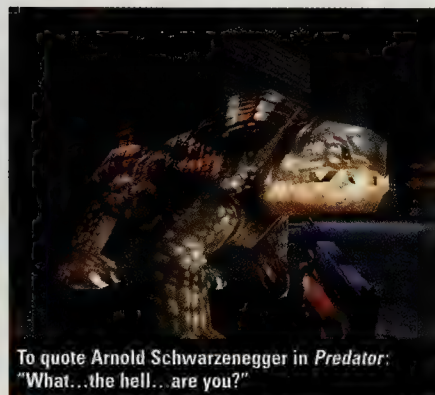
Needless to say, there are wheels turning within wheels. In the game's early missions, you drop the hammer on NSF forces in New York City, retrieving a stolen cache of the antidote. But before you get a chance to feel good about busting up the NSF hijacking, it becomes clear that these "terrorists" might not be the threat they've been made out to be, and that your brother is in grave danger from UNATCO itself, and that UNATCO may just be a front for a darker government agency, and...

The threads of conspiracy just keep on unraveling, and weaving together in new and surprising patterns. There's no way to divulge even tantalizing hints about the game's labyrinthine plot without spoiling secrets, so I won't even try. Let's just say that each and every one of the classic conspiracy theories — Area 51, the Illuminati, men in black, secret quarantine centers, Majestic 12, shadow governments, etc. — plays a part in the massive, deliriously complex storyline.

Best of all, the game's many branches lead to a wide variety of "Choose Your Own Adventure"-style side alleys, many of which send the rest of the story off in a direction that will seal off yet other side alleys. It will take some 100 hours of investigating before you explore every route to the three possible endings.



Ever stabbed a Man in Black while invisible? I didn't think so.



To quote Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Predator*: "What...the hell...are you?"

You must be prepared for close-quarters combat with all manner of man and mechanism.

REVIEWS



WE'RE FREE-FORMING

Deus Ex is set up as a truly free-form game. You're free to make a surprising number of choices within each mission, and while the game is linear in the mission-to-mission sense, you could still end up playing through an unrecognizable version of the same game your buddy loaded up and ran through. They'd be like discussions of parallel universes; you'd both have visited the same locales and encountered the same characters, but the variations made possible by your decision-making will quickly spread a rippling butterfly effect over the game.

The different approaches distinguish themselves early. There is no set way to approach any mission objective. You can go in stealthily, sticking to the shadows and silently subduing guards before hotwiring a security keypad. Or you could get through the same door by coming in with guns blazing and then punching through it with a heavy weapon. Unlike shoot-'em-up 3D action games, or even critically acclaimed stealth-fests like *Thief*, *Deus Ex* makes no preconceptions about what approach you'll take to the game world. You're free to get it done any way you can — with the understanding that your choices will have real repercussions later. For example, if you pulverize an enemy with a heavy weapon, you won't be able to

retrieve important items from the corpse. If you skip side quests, you might be missing a critical keycode and be forced to find a different route around a locked door (but a route will be there, somewhere).

J.C. Denton will evolve according to your choices, as well. Being a cybernetically modified agent, you'll continually upgrade yourself with augmentations picked up throughout the game. Each "aug" you pick up has two possible applications, and once you pick which one will be incorporated, the other becomes unavailable. Thus, if you pick up a leg augmentation, you might have to choose between a Stealth aug and a Speed aug. One will make you near-silent, the other will make you incredibly fast. Bit by bit, you'll mold yourself into a carefully customized character. (You'll also have to deal with the classic cyber-moral dilemmas about the shifting nature of humanity. Spector keeps you on your toes.)

There's an awesome amount of weapons, skills, and augmentations available. Even a partial list would be exhaustive. Pistols, sniper rifles, crossbows, combat knives, high-power GEP guns; stealth legs, light-amplification optics, even invisibility — you can eventually earn the ability to do just about anything. You earn experience points with successful completion of mission objectives, and through bonuses for discovering locations

and successfully using skills. You can then spend these points on increasing your proficiency in any skill (you're either Untrained, Trained, or an Expert in a skill) from among a list that includes computers, demolitions, marksmanship, medical, and others.

IT'S A CONSPIRACY

Just a small sampling of some of the twisted conspiracy theories trotted out for *Deus Ex*:



ROSWELL'S LEGACY

Did the U.S. government recover alien corpses at a UFO crash site in 1947? Is the government in collusion with aliens today?



ILLUMINATI

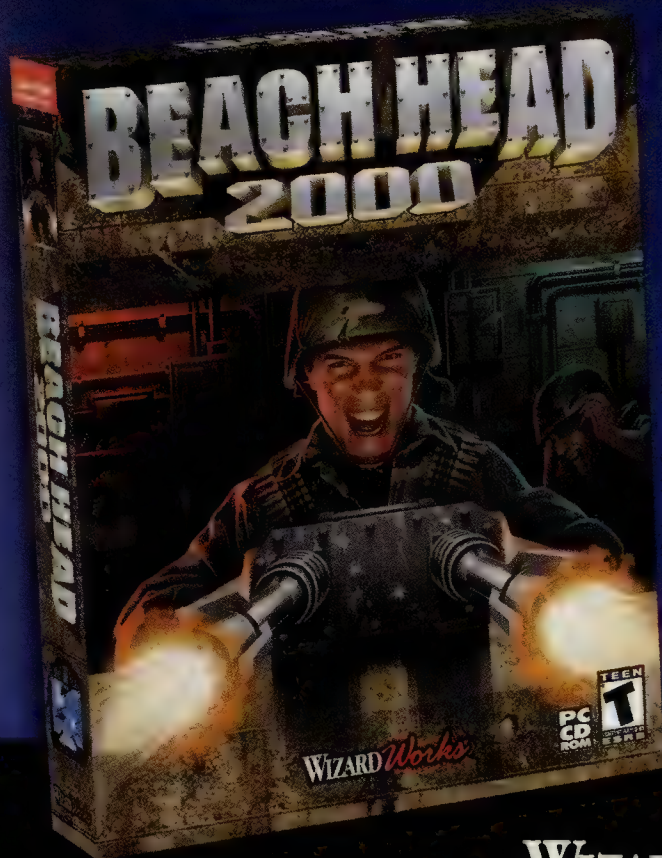
Is a top-secret international cabal of satanic industrialists secretly manipulating world events? Fnord.



THE FEMA SURPRISE

Does the Federal Emergency Management Agency exist only as a means to one day suspend the Constitution?

DEFEND OR DIE!



You are the last line of defense against an overwhelming enemy assault. Blast away at land, sea and air forces as they rush you from every direction. Clear the beach, defend your post and pray that the supply plane comes in time!

IT AIN'T NO BEACH PARTY!

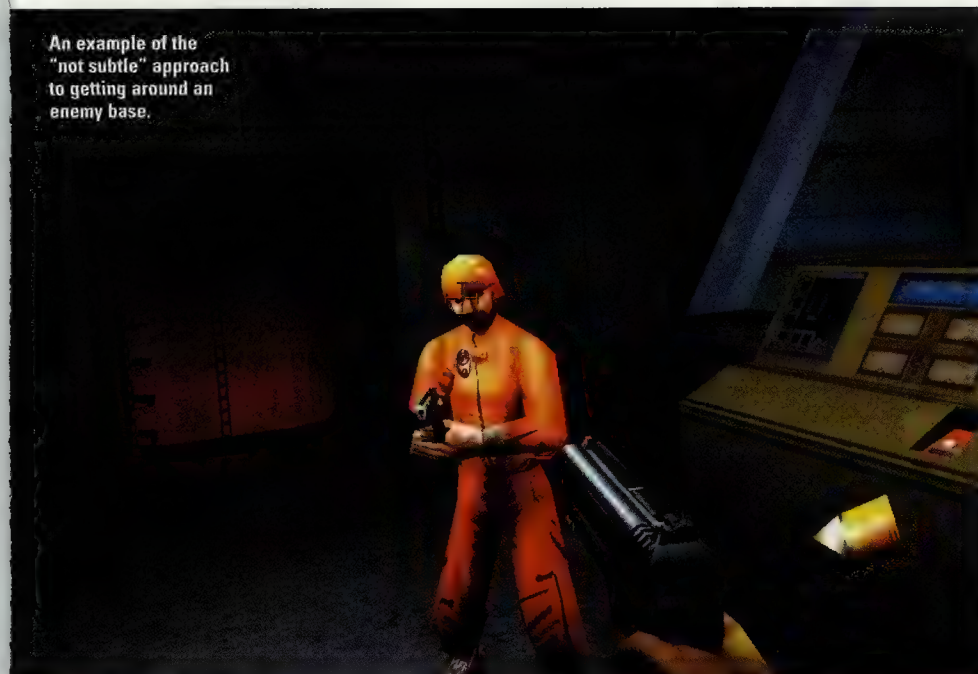
- Aim in on landing troops, helicopters, tanks, grenades, jet fighters, bombers and more!
- In your face hardcore photo-realistic 3D action!
- Wave after wave of intense enemy assaults!

AVAILABLE NOW!

WIZARD Works



An example of the "not subtle" approach to getting around an enemy base.



MORE THAN AN INVENTORY

But *Deus Ex* is more than just an impressive collection of stuff. The genius of the game is the endlessly clever uses you can put everything to. At times, it seems like the game is reading your mind — the myriad of combinations and experiments always seems to yield a new and thrilling result. In fact, the limited inventory space puts a premium on thoughtful selection of items.

The whole game world is a laboratory for your personal approach to mission-solving. When hostages need to be rescued from a subway platform wired with explosives, you can use Electromagnetic Pulse grenades to disable the bombs and then subdue the guards without injuring the hostages. Not feeling so humanitarian? You can just sneak into an airshaft, set up a

sniper's nest with a clear view of the explosives, and shoot them — triggering an explosion that kills everyone in the place. You won't win too many friends with the latter approach, but there's nothing stopping you, either. It's truly a free-form game.

As a result, there's nothing frustrating about *Deus Ex*. You won't be stuck anywhere for long. Can't figure out how to electronically bypass a door? I guarantee there's a way to sneak around it from another entrance. Security bot too tough to tackle head-on? There's got to be a security control panel where you can rig the bot to switch off (or even program it to attack its human confederates). Every goal has at least several routes to successful completion, and it's all a matter of taste to determine which route you'll go. I had a lot of trouble figuring out electronic bypassing, and wasn't too keen on head-on battles, so I invested all my experience points in stealth and sniping. I always found a sneaky way to slip past my enemies or take them out from a safe distance.

This was really rewarding to me. It's unusual to find a game that seems to be tailoring itself to your preferences as you play it.

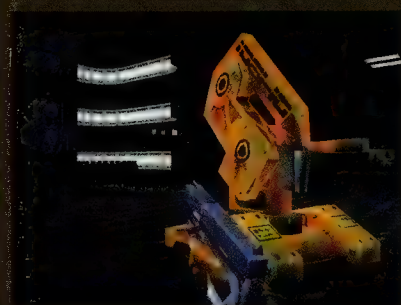
All of these wonderful features are in service of a story that keeps surprising you, too. There's no time to get bored with *Deus Ex*; too much is coming at you all the time. Characters



You finally get your chance to shoot it out with the Men in Black.

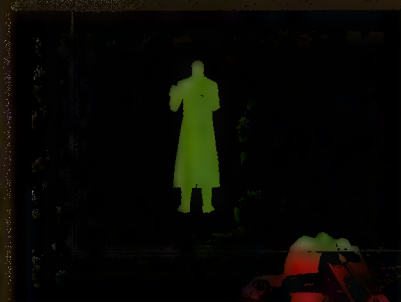
MAN OR MACHINE?

Welcome to the wonderful and existentially troubling world of cybernetic human augmentation.



>>> REPAIR BOTS

Repair bots and medical bots are where you can repair damage and implement augmentation upgrades.



>>> AMPLIFIED VISION

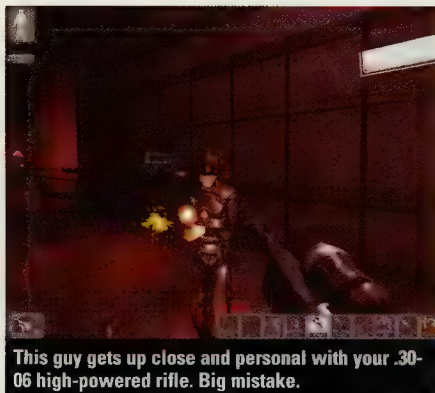
Handy eye-amplification augmentations will let you see bad guys in pitch darkness.



>>> CYBER SECRETS

When you uncover the nasty secrets behind your cyber-augmentation, I guarantee you won't be happy about your status as half-man, half-machine.

drop tantalizing hints about the machinations going on around you. You overhear scripted snippets of conversations that lead you off down absorbing side alleys of plot exposition. By the end(s) of the game (there are three variant endings, depending on different branches at key points in the story), you'll be able to fully appreciate the careful construction and elaborate choreography of the plot — a minor miracle when you consider just how much freedom you're granted within the structure of each mission.



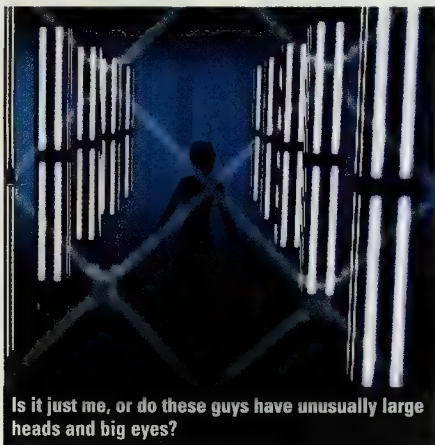
This guy gets up close and personal with your .30-06 high-powered rifle. Big mistake.

ENTER THE CONSPIRACY

Warren Spector demonstrates a gleefully encyclopedic knowledge of conspiracy theories (his Austin offices contain a library of kook lore, and he obviously mined it for everything it was worth). As you juggle the horrifying implications of each new plot twist, you unearth a hilariously breathtaking mosaic of apocalyptic intent. The plot will take you from New York to Hong Kong to Paris to Vandenberg Air Force Base in the middle of the desert. You'll have a chance to ally yourself with any number of shady international consortium types, to make friends or enemies of Triad gangs, and even rub elbows with strange beings that may or may not be cloned descendants of extraterrestrials. This thing packs all the convolution of *The X-Files* onto one little CD-ROM.

A wealth of detail fills out every nook and cranny of the game world. The urinals work. There are beer bottles on the tables in the taverns, which you can pick up and take if you want. There are rats scuttling in the alleyways. It looks and feels like a living, dynamic world, and you always have the sense that your actions will alter it profoundly. Which they will, creating an atmosphere of dire importance whenever you try any stunt.

Deus Ex earns huge points for ambitious scope, dynamic design, and engrossing story, but has a few significant weak points that keep it out of the range of truly stratospheric



Is it just me, or do these guys have unusually large heads and big eyes?

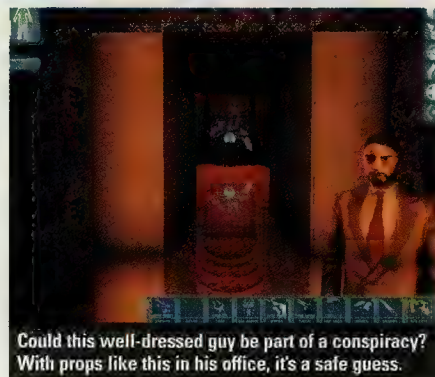


Weapons can be modified — this pistol has been converted into a quiet stealth weapon.

review scores. The foremost is the clunky level of writing and voice acting displayed in almost all of the dialogue. There's lots of fascinating stuff being thrown around in every conversation, which is why it's a shame that the lines themselves are obvious and stilted, and delivered by flat, run-of-the-mill "game voices." Denton is the worst offender: it's annoying to be voiced by such a monotonous mummy of a voice actor. Before too long, I was spacebar-jumping ahead of his dialogue as soon as I could read it on the screen.

Another problem is the game's chug factor: there are slowdowns to be tolerated on almost any system (although Glide-based 3D cards will fare much better than GeForce cards, which can barely process the game). Load times are long and distracting, especially when you're moving in and out of sections of each location. Saving takes forever, as does reloading (which you'll be doing a lot of; even on the easiest difficulty setting, expect to croak at least a half-dozen times before you successfully complete each mission). It's a testament to how good this game is that I played the majority of the game on a non-Glide system and loved every bit of it.

Also, there is an unavoidable amount of crate-stacking and jump-puzzling to be waded through. There was a compromise made when it was decided that pick-ups would be located in crates strewn around the world; whether you're wandering the side alleys of Hell's Kitchen or the markets of Hong Kong, you're never very far from a random crate filled with lethal weaponry or biomechanical augmentation equipment. It might have been a necessary evil in order to



Could this well-dressed guy be part of a conspiracy? With props like this in his office, it's a safe guess.

facilitate gameplay, but I can't help but think it's a bit silly, especially in a game that's otherwise so rigorously real-feeling.

These are small annoyances, though. *Deus Ex* is a joy to play, a veritable treasure chest of gripping gameplay and plot surprises. It's a first-person 3D RPG that will satisfy action fans, roleplaying freaks, adventure gamers, and most anyone. *Deus Ex* is fantastic.

— Daniel Morris

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Huge; replayable; intricately assembled plot; a whole bunch of fun.

LOWS: 3D card incompatibilities; slowdowns; clunky dialogue and voice acting.

BOTTOM LINE: A must-own...a rare and rewarding game for fans of any genre.

PC GAMER 94%
EDITORS' CHOICE

CHALLENGE YOUR PERCEPTIONS



8.10.00

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SURVIVAL IS A STATE OF MIND.

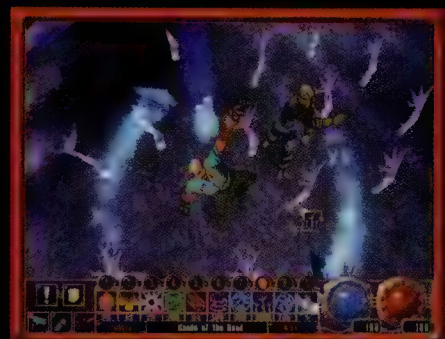
In the near future, Psionics are among us. Their evil thoughts pulsate across time and space, disrupting and eventually corrupting even the strongest of minds. One man, Agent Nathaniel Cain, stands against them, risking his own sanity to save ours. But, in a world of madmen and wicked women, Cain is about to learn the ultimate lesson...that evil's relative.



Earn 80 Talents [Psionic weapons] such as *Eye of Ra*, *Fireball* and *Mummy's Revenge* to destroy your opponent



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Over 20 story-driven single-player levels with surprising twists and turns



Animated Violence

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CATEGORY	Action	REQUIRED	PII 233, 24MB RAM, 500MB hard-drive space, 8MB 3D card
DEVELOPER	Bioware	WE RECOMMEND	PIII 333, 64MB RAM
PUBLISHER	Interplay	MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS	None

MDK2

Bioware jumps into the action-adventure genre with a mad scientist, six-legged dog, and janitor, with great results.

Though it developed a cult following and garnered great reviews, *MDK* never got its commercial due when it hit PCs three years ago, thanks in no small part to the fact that anyone interested in action games was hopping on the Internet for the adrenaline rush of multiplayer *Quake*. (Buy *MDK* if can you find it; it's one of the best single-player games ever — Ed...and cult member)

Even so, it was surprising to learn that Interplay tapped *Baldur's Gate* creator Bioware to replace Shiny Entertainment for *MDK 2*'s development. After putting the game through its paces, though, I'm convinced these guys could produce a front-runner for whatever genre they choose to conquer.

The original game focused solely on Kurt Hectic, a janitor-turned-superhero with a paraglider strapped to his back, a chaingun welded to his hand, and a sniper scope built in to his helmet. The sequel throws a new alien invasion at a trio of heroes, all of whom you get a chance to control in different stages of the game.

Kurt's still here, with the same getup and essentially the same gameplay: blast anything that moves until the coast is clear, shoot something to open a new area, then coast (or float upward if fans are available) to a new area for some more mile-a-minute runnin' and gunnin' action. When he does pause for breath, using the sniper scope and variety of mortars, grenades, and homing missiles adds



The levels featuring Dr. Hawkins are typically more puzzle-oriented.



OpenGL support means impressive framerates even when you're running in higher resolutions like 1024 x 768.

a strategic angle. It also gives Kurt a chance to get a close-up on the crazy antics of the enemies who dance, scratch, and chat while on guard duty. Kurt runs and soars through environments depicted with surreal, mind-bending 3D graphics: imagine something H. R. Geiger would come up with if he'd dabbled in psychedelics and decided to use a full-color palette. Though he spends some time dashing down corridors, he eventually reaches larger environments that yawn into impressively massive expanses.

Max, a cigar-chomping, six-legged dog (four of which can tote uzis!) and Kurt's boss, Dr. Hawkins, each get to do their part to stop the new alien incursion. Max's segments are out-and-out triggerfests — and shouldn't they be, since he can pack such firepower? — but he's got a couple of hoverpacks you'll have to master in order to complete his levels.

The levels featuring the ditzzy Hawkins are the most problematic: by combining items you pick up and carry in both hands, you create weapons and tools needed to fight enemies and make your way past obstacles. It seems like a good idea, but the heavy emphasis on platform jumping puzzles and the clunky interface — a left- and right-hand affair that's not only clumsy but entirely dependent on trial-and-error — is an exercise in frustration.

Hardcore fans might find the game slightly short,



As Max, you will truly let loose the dogs of war.

but others will find it offers plenty of gameplay (though absolutely no replay value). And I'd argue that even a small dose of *MDK 2* offers tons of entertainment — healthy doses of humor (that are genuinely funny), great cut-scenes (the Jack Kirby-inspired opening is fantastic), and an impressive variety of environments. Check out the demo if you must, but take our word for it — this could be the best console-style game for the PC this year.

— Stephen Poole

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Psychedelic graphics; great characters; humor that never wears thin.

LOWS: Too much platform-jumping; slightly clunky adventure-game interface.

BOTTOM LINE: A top-notch action-arcade game with a sly, dry sense of humor.

PC GAMER **88%**
EXCELLENT

CATEGORY	Roleplaying	REQUIRED	PII 233, 64MB RAM, 800MB hard-drive space, D3D 3D card
DEVELOPER	Nihilistic	WE RECOMMEND	PIII, 128MB RAM, 1.4GB hard-drive space
PUBLISHER	Activision	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	4 (3 players plus Storyteller)

Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption

The most eagerly anticipated roleplaying release this year needs a little redemption of its own.

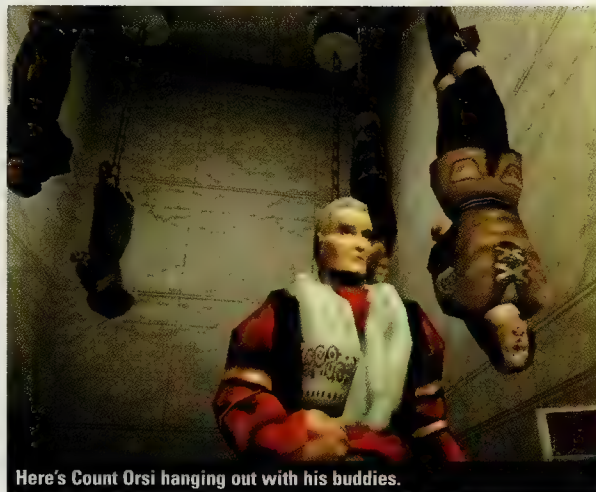
Roleplaying fans have been waiting a long time for *Vampire: The Masquerade*. After more than a year of tantalizing previews, developer interviews, and a multiplayer beta, we were ready to lock ourselves in the building when the final gold disc made its way to our office. Imagine the disappointment, then, when *Vampire* came up well short of our inflated expectations. Normally you can't hold it against a game when it fails to live up to its pre-release hype, but with goals this lofty, you can't help but feel a little let down.

Nihilistic Software used the *Vampire: The Masquerade* license from White Wolf Publishing as the framework for this ambi-

tious RPG. The pen-and-paper roleplaying game breaks up all the world's vampires into 13 different clans, each with different abilities. While the pen-and-paper game focuses more on modern-day vampirism and the politics behind the bloodsuckers, the computer game starts off in medieval Prague.

You are Christof Romuald, a crusader fighting for the glory of God, injured in a skirmish and left behind to heal in a convent. Christof awakens to see the beautiful nun Anezka tending him, and falls madly in love with her. After recuperating he rides the local mines of a demonic pestilence, bringing him to the attention of a clan of vampires in town, the Brujah, who then Embrace him, turning him into what he hates most — a vampire.

The story tracks Christof's struggle with the newfound evil within him — he is a God-fearing man who has now become



Here's Count Orsi hanging out with his buddies.

what he perceives to be a child of the devil. Christof's main drive, however, is Anezka, and he'll end up chasing the love of his very long life through Prague, Vienna, and eventually modern-day London and New York.

The emphasis on story is what really drives *Vampire*'s single-player campaign. Unfortunately, the path is very linear — no matter what options are chosen in the dialogue trees, one way or another Christof goes from one quest to another with little deviation. The narrow path keeps the story tight and compelling, but leaves you with very little game affecting decision-making.

The big decisions involve what weapons and gear to equip, and how to spend experience points on character statistics. Eventually the party will grow to as many as four characters, each of which can be controlled independently.

The control interface is a breeze; the mouse steers the characters and makes interaction with the game world very intuitive.

But here, some of the gameplay mechanics start to fall apart. The entire game takes place in real-time, which means that while you're controlling one character, the AI



THE SDK

By the time this issue hits stands, Nihilistic will have released the Storyteller software development kit, or SDK. The SDK will contain tools for aspiring programmers/Storytellers to create their own chronicles from scratch. Players can use a Java-like language to create their own scripts, as well as plug-in for Maya (a 3D editing program) that will let players create their own 3D models. Look for it at www.nihilistic.com.



By the end of the medieval portion of the game, your party picks a mammoth arsenal.

takes over all the others. You can take some degree of control over the AI by selecting ready items in characters' quick-item slots, the chosen quick disciplines (spells), or the characters' current aggression state (defensive, neutral, or aggressive). Unfortunately, the AI leaves a lot to be desired. Casting disciplines drains energy from a character's blood pool (which is replenished by snacking on the locals), and during battles, AI characters are much too eager to cast useless disciplines and increase the odds of inducing frenzy (where they go mad because of a lack of blood).



At several points in the game, in-engine cutscenes introduce new characters or new areas.

Or, instead of concentrating on more powerful enemies, they'll pick on smaller targets and allow themselves to be pelted with fireball attacks by enemy mages. In some cases, the AI characters will even walk fully into the sunlight, regardless of the shadowed path right next to them. (Sunlight is bad for vampires.)

Carefully monitoring aggression modes can make things a bit easier, but there's no happy medium. The defensive mode leaves your characters standing around doing nothing. Aggressive makes them run off and hunt for enemies — which usually gets them killed in short order. And even neutral, the most common setting, often sends them in pursuit of fleeing enemies — straight into a nest of new threats.

All of this wouldn't be too bad, however, if you could save the game every few minutes. Amazingly, you can't. The game saves in two different ways. Each time you enter a new area (like going from the first-level dungeon to the second), the game auto-saves in a special slot. The only way to save games in one of the 12 save slots is to get back to the start-off haven, either by running all the way back from whatever dungeon you might be in, or by casting the "Walk the Abyss" spell. Characters can cast "Walk the Abyss" by picking up scrolls, or by studying the discipline — which takes up valuable experience points. However, we

THE LINGO

The various vampiric terms got you confused? Use our handy glossary to decipher the meaning of those foreign words:

CHILDE The progeny of a vampire.

CLAN A group of vampires with similar traits. There are 13 clans, which reportedly date back to the time of Caine's grandchildren.

COTERIE A group of vampires journeying together. In normal D&D parlance, it's called the "party."

THE EMBRACE The act that turns a mortal into a vampire, usually by first getting blood sucked out by the vampire and then the drinking of that vampire's own blood.

HAVEN The safe home of a vampire. In *Vampire*, it's where players can save the game, distribute experience, and store items in the vault.

KINDRED The entire race of vampires. Also used for a single vampire.

THE MASQUERADE The act of hiding the true existence of vampires from the mortal race. In other words, the reason why blood isn't sold at local 7-11s.

SIRE The vampire that created another.

TORPOR The state of undead death. This can be brought on by a stake in the heart or through other wounds. Vampires in this game can come back to life from Torpor through the use of the Awaken discipline.



Christof's adventures will lead his group above the city streets in search of wayward vampires.

even found some areas in the game where it wouldn't let us cast the spell. For a good three hours of gameplay, the only way we could save our progress was by running from one level of the dungeon to another.

You enter a world of frustration. While traveling through a level, picking up all the treasure and defeating all the enemies, you might walk around the corner to encounter a terrifying beast that will demolish the party with a few vicious swipes. Since there's no way to save other than running all the way back the way you came, you end up losing a good 45 minutes of gameplay this way. The next half-hour is spent cursing while trying to retrace your steps, after having loaded from the last level change.

What makes these problems even more tragic is the sheer beauty and shining quality



Dance clubs frequented by Kindred like to decorate with blood. Fetching, isn't it?

SAVE AND REVIVE

There's a way to work around some of the game's problems until you can get a patch installed. Simply right-click on the shortcut for the game, click on Properties, and then add "-console" to the end of the "Target" line (after the quotation marks). Then, in the game, hit the tilde (~) key to trigger the console, where you can type any number of commands.

Our favorites are "revive" to completely heal the selected character and "addthing savecross." By clicking on a Save Cross, you can save the game into a slot at any time. For all the possible console commands, type "commands" for a menu.

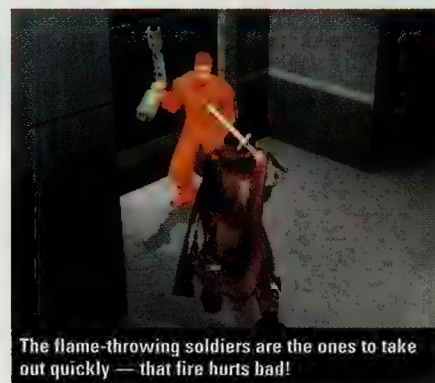


The brothel above the Temple of Set has some great architecture — the building, we mean, not the workers.

of the game. There has never been a more beautifully created RPG. Not only are the character models gorgeous, but the full-3D backgrounds make them come alive. The story goes through love, heartache, betrayal, politics, and outright revenge. And the simple play control is elegant and straightforward.

The multiplayer aspect of the game is really its saving grace (though still flawed by bugs). You can take on the role of Storyteller in multiplayer sessions, creating your own chronicles and major storylines for gamers over the Internet using Won.net. It's hugely cool (see the full scoop on the Storyteller mode in the Alternate Lives column on page 148), despite the promised tools to let budding Storytellers create their own levels and characters not being there at the game's launch (they should be available via a patch by the time you read this). The game comes with two ready-made Chronicles, and four empty areas (Prague, Vienna, London, and New York) where Storytellers can enter the game and create monsters and NPCs on their own. The game also comes with several salons, where players can join in and simply chat with each other. Unfortunately, all games are limited to only four players, so the scale of the adventure is always small. However, the multiplayer portion of the game as it stands is excellent, provided you get people with the right attitudes in your game.

After having spent countless hours in multiplayer and playing through the single-player portion of the game, it kills me not to give this game a higher score. However, fresh out of the box, it's simply too frustrating to play, which will likely make most



The flame-throwing soldiers are the ones to take out quickly — that fire hurts bad!

players quit after only five to 10 hours. While it will likely get a lot better with some patches coming down the line, *Vampire* has far too many problems for me to recommend it unreservedly.

However, it still has the potential to be the best RPG ever created — and we'll keep a close eye on the forthcoming patches from Nihilistic to see if that happens.

— Michael Wolf

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Innovative multiplayer mode; gorgeous graphics; intuitive interface; deep storyline.

LOWS: Buggy; bad character AI; lacks promised features; inability to save at any time.

BOTTOM LINE: Fresh out of the box, it's disappointing — but with patches, it could be the king of RPGs.

PC GAMER **76%**
GOOD


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Evolva

In which Pooh discovers that all things under the sun are equal and demand to be killed mercilessly.

Evolva is a gorgeous treatise on the twin dangers of malleable DNA and projectile-shooting weaponry. It takes the Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest and jams it straight down your action-starved throat, eschewing such fluffery as a complicated plot. For all of its fancy genetic/scientific jargon, *Evolva* simply asks you to follow the basic philosophy set forth by military geniuses from Alexander to Patton — if it moves, kill it.

This 3D third-person perspective action game goes heavy on character customization and world exploration; its squad-based play delicately intermixes fierce balls-out fighting and group tactics.

Four genohunters, beings with the ability to absorb the genes of their vanquished foes, are tasked with the exploration of an eye-delighting world hued in chilly blues and delicious greens. Each of these beings holds a specific inclination at the game's start: one is the brute force of the operation, while his comrades claim agility, speed, and intellect as their primary qualities.

Once involved in gameplay, though, you can suck up scattered genes like a Hoover — and then anything goes. The added genes can be used to tinker with weapons and special abilities in a continuing process of individualizing your hunters and shaping the squad into a fearsome killing unit. Toss some armor onto a brutish genohunter and he can absorb massive hits and pave the way for his allies to make well-timed flanking attacks.



Genohunters will find with great power comes mass destruction.

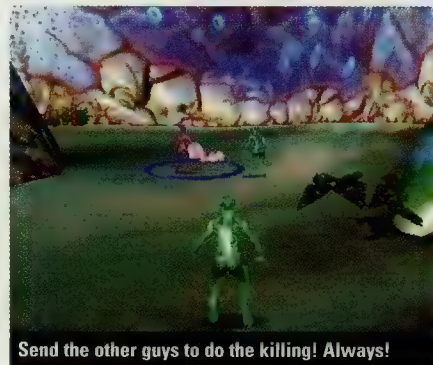


Starship Troopers-esque bug shooters hold delicious DNA.

We guess we should now throw out a figure that Interplay repeatedly tossed at the feet of critics like some sort of grenade: there are more than one billion possible variations on the basic genohunter. We must admit that this number is pretty impressive, moreso because it could never in a billion years be verified.

Mission-based play runs these hunters through 12 scenarios, or you can go online for a serious bit of multiplayer mayhem. Straightforward play requires a unit to storm an objective, kill the enemy with extreme prejudice, tamper with the double helix, and move on. Though the game can be faulted for its emphasis on sheer destructive force, evolution and higher thinking have never been any sort of bedfellows. A simple control scheme allows players to manage one hunter while simultaneously guiding the others to a target. Players may choose to control any warrior in the squad, and a series of windows on the bottom of the screen shows what the other genohunters are doing. Unfortunately, the support members sometime take a bit too long to travel from A to B, and these windows just seem to be there to allow you to gauge when to stop and let the team catch up.

Killing bad guys allows for mutation, and mutation, simply put, drives this puppy both long and hard. You can morph your characters at will by selecting a special "evolution" menu. Some increased abilities,



Send the other guys to do the killing! Always!

such as armor, speed, and strength, are purely utilitarian. Other mutations will be required to reach certain objectives or crush the well-animated boss monsters. Still other twists of genetic fate, such as the mucous-shooting gun (whose sticky goop can be set aflame), are just plain fun to behold. Building the perfect genohunter is actually a very fun challenge — had anyone known that evolution was this entertaining, thousands of drool-filled sleep sessions in thousands of biology classes could have been avoided.

— Greg Orlando

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Strong, colorful graphics; genetic upgrades are cool; entertaining mayhem.

LOWS: Not much thinking required; hardly any story at all.

BOTTOM LINE: Trade in your brain for some neo-carnage and just enjoy the ride.

PC GAMER

79%

GOOD

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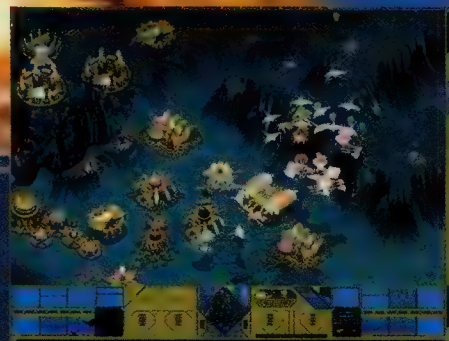
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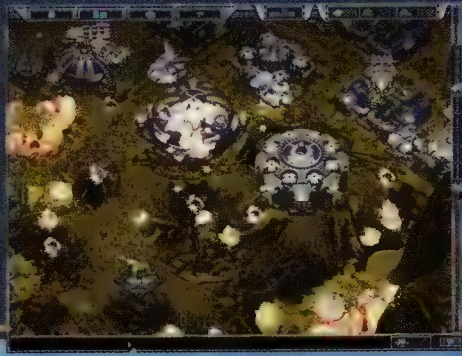
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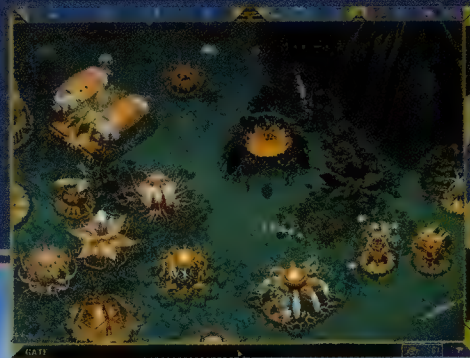
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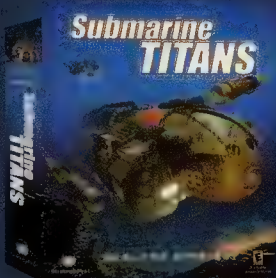


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CATEGORY	Simulation	REQUIRED	P233, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerator card
DEVELOPER	14 Degrees East	WE RECOMMEND	PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D accelerator
PUBLISHER	Interplay	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	8

Klingon Academy

This Academy needs to go back to school. And go stand in the corner for a while and think about what it's done.

Interplay's *Starfleet Academy* was a disaster where it counted most — it didn't model Star Trek combat in the same way the films and television series do. *Klingon Academy* sets out to redress those errors and bring honor back to Interplay and their 14 Degrees East division — building on its original iteration as LucasArts' *TIE Fighter* did to *X-Wing*.

The story (as it is) concerns an elite academy founded by *Star Trek VI*'s General Chang (Christopher Plummer), designed to mold Klingon captains into perfect warriors. There are 25 missions divided into simulation training and live-fire Klingon Civil War missions.

An Instant Action mode and both co-op and deathmatch multiplayer are offered. Single-player mission design tends toward simplistic hunt and kill or escort missions, with the only real innovation being warping between sectors. Sometimes you get to choose in-mission branches. For instance, when you're fighting against the Romulans, you get a distress call. Do you stay or go?

David Warner reprises his role as Chancellor Gorkon and Michael "Lt. Worf" Dorn lends his voice to yet another Worf relative. Plummer and Warner earn their keep in the FMV cutscenes with performances that put the rest of the actors to shame.

Klingon Academy features eight flyable Klingon ships, from giant battle cruisers to the nimble Bird of Prey. Each features disturbingly similar flight characteristics, but



different weapons and power levels. You'd think flying a small craft would be a dramatic difference from a cruiser that's supposed to be twice the size of the Enterprise, but it doesn't feel that way.

You'll face warships from among Trek perennials like the Romulans, Gorn, Tholians, Federation, and a brand new race, the Shakurians. Due to virtually brain-dead artificial intelligence, each race fights just like all the others, with the only difference being the size and style of the guns they fire. The main tactic of all enemy races is to ram into you like a blundering idiot, while firing its own weapons.

The flight model is much improved over *Starfleet Academy*'s where you basically flew the ship like a dogfighter and Trek concepts like engines, damage control, power allocation, etc., were downplayed in favor of the action. *Klingon Academy* uses a VOS (Verbal Orders System). Each station is assigned a keystroke and you can give orders by choosing from a sub-menu. For example: "More power to the shields" translates to 1 (for engineer), 3 (for power settings), 2 (battle: defensive) in VOS. This is cumbersome, but gets easier once you memorize the combinations.

This game has also been slowed down dramatically, giving a much better illusion of size and power, rather than speed and maneuverability. It isn't perfect — the designers keep things running quickly, probably to avoid alienating action fans — but it's closer to the pace we saw in *The Wrath of Kahn*.

KA is fully 3D accelerated, but ship models are jagged, starfields are lifeless, and planets, and other immobile objects are dull.



Klingon Academy is better than *Starfleet Academy*, but it would have only been impressive had it been released two years ago. As it stands, its bad AI, so-so graphics, dull mission design, and uninspiring story kills whatever positives one could find in the inventive VOS system and improved game speed. In short, *Klingon Academy* dies not like a warrior, but like a lowly ptaQ.

— Andrew S. Bub

DOUBLE TAKE

Yep, that's classically trained actor Christopher Plummer as General Chang. Can you spot him in one of his previous roles below? Here's a hint: if you can successfully identify him from among the characters below, you're a great big wuss.



GRAND MOFF
TARKIN
Star Wars



CAPTAIN
STEBLING
The Love Boat



CAPTAIN VON
TRAPP
Sound of Music

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Cool combat interface; better control and action than *Starfleet Academy*.

LOWS: Unimpressive graphics; generally poor voice acting; uninspired story; no honor.

BOTTOM LINE: Consider this a second strike for the *Star Trek Academy* line.

PC GAMER
TOLERABLE

42%

Ground Control

In this unoriginal yet entertaining RTS, leave the construction to the drones, and get ready for combat.

ts claims of revolutionary design notwithstanding, *Ground Control* isn't the first real-time strategy game to chuck the nuances of strategic base management and resource gathering for the unadulterated adrenaline rush of tactical combat. But while it isn't the first to plumb this territory, its brilliant graphics, high-powered combat, powerfully efficient interface, and inviting multi-player modes are enough to satisfy any fan of the genre.

Set in the 25th century on the far-flung planet Krig 7-B, *Ground Control*'s back story could be summed up tidily as Bible versus Business. Squaring off against the powerful Crayven Corporation's Security Forces is the Pax Dei, the military arm of the Order of the New Dawn — the Earth's largest religion, and one that won't hesitate to fight for what it believes God has ordained to be theirs.

Thirty missions — 15 for each side — comprise the single-player campaign; during the course of those battles (and in somewhat expected fashion) you gradually learn that there is much more at stake here than simply taking control of this rather gloomy little planet.

Mission types cover the usual spectrum of tasks: escort assignments, retrieving important objects, rescuing friendly units,

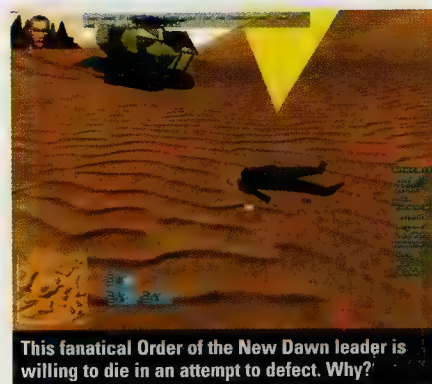


The intensely fast-paced battles can make controlling a dozen squads a daunting task, so use the hot-key commands.

defending bases, and of course full-scale assaults on enemy installations, to name a few. But while there are bases to defend or attack, there's no production involved. Sit through the briefing from your CO, then pick which squads to load on a drop ship (up to three in some missions) before landing planetside — simple as that.

Force selection isn't merely a question of deciding on a balance of air, armor, and infantry units; after setting up your squads, you can rename them and choose which special weapons and other equipment will augment their standard loadout. Commanders eager to draw blood can opt for an Autoload function good enough for victory, though choosing your own equipment should yield much better results.

Even on what we would consider to be a mid-range system (PII 300), *Ground Control* delivers stunning graphical effects — multi-colored explosions and missile trails fill the sky during heavy battles, lens flare affects your vision, debris rains down after units explode, and ground troops are shredded into a true war scene of blood and gore. The



This fanatical Order of the New Dawn leader is willing to die in an attempt to defect. Why?

action can get a bit choppy when viewed from on high, but it's all about those sweet, sweet effects.

Once you hit the drop zone, the fate of the battle lies entirely in your hands. You set unit formations, attack postures, and movement modes, then view the action from an adjustable third-person camera that's one of the smoothest yet implemented in a real-time strategy game. Better yet, you can use hotkeys for all these squad-behavior commands, as well as for ordering squads to deploy special weapons like mortars and anti-aircraft batteries.

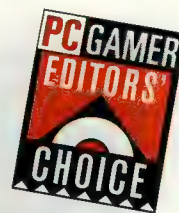
Generally, the AI for unit behavior is adequate; units ordered to fire freely will do so, while those told to hold a position will go down with guns blazing. Not as satisfying, though, is the fact that units told to



Ground Control's intuitive camera system makes it simple to zoom quickly in on the action and get a feel for what your troops are up to.

CATEGORY	Wargame	REQUIRED	P200, 32MB RAM, 140MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Big Time Software	WE RECOMMEND	P11 300, 64MB RAM
PUBLISHER	Battlefront.com	MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS	None

Combat Mission Beyond Overlord



White-knuckled action and extraordinary realism: if this is the future of PC wargaming, then bring it on!

As readers of my column already know, PC wargaming is going through a severe mid-life crisis at the moment. Traditional, boardgame-derived, top-down, hex-grid games have reached an apogee of complexity and have proven their suitability for simulating huge campaigns; there's really not a whole lot of room for major innovations. At the opposite pole, pure real-time combat in a true 3D environment only works for very small, squad-level battles (a la *Rainbow Six*). And serious enthusiasts have categorically rejected such massive RTS designs as *WarCraft II* and *Age of Empires* (for all their excellence in other ways) as templates for realistic tactical wargaming.

For many wargamers, the question has now become: where can we possibly go from here?

Enter Big Time Software and *Combat Mission* — a debut worthy of cheers and fanfare. In effect, Big Time approached its quest from a clean slate, eschewing “tradition” in search of a dramatic new wargaming gestalt, a total experience quite different from any catalog of its separate ingredients. They started off with one given: what features would wargamers most want to see in the “game of their dreams”? Over the past two



This game's street-fighting may be the best ever. Here, the Americans prepare to assault Aachen.

years, Big Time has created a design that, while imperfectly realized in some ways, has the potential to knock your socks off.

Combat Mission does not try to reinvent the wheel. All of its three major elements have clear antecedents: *Close Combat* was the first system to make morale and human emotion an integral part of gameplay, *Tac-Ops* pioneered the system of “simultaneous execution” of phased orders, and MicroProse at least tried to integrate 3D action with tactical planning when they released *Across The Rhine*.

Having said as much, however, I think *Combat Mission* inherited its heart and soul from *Squad Leader*. It manifests the same awesome blend of fine-grained realism, tactical finesse, and primal drama, while providing you with joyous freedom to romp and plan and savor.

Before you even boot up the tutorial, I urge you to forget everything you've learned from all previous wargames in any format. In this game, all planning and all subsequent action

take place in a genuine 3D environment. Most crucially, gameplay is utterly consistent across the whole spectrum of camera positions and views. Whether you get rid of all the trees or not, make buildings transparent or not, shut off the smoke or not, and whether you choose to observe the battle from the perspective of a soaring hawk or down in the mud with the “trench cam” view, makes absolutely no difference to the program.

The system is truly elegant. While the game is paused, each side issues orders to all units — this allows you to plan tactics in depth and harness them to a clear overall strategy. You do not labor under the merciless pressure of a total real-time design. And yet, “pressure” is an integral part of combat, and dealing with it is one of the things a good commander must learn to do. You will feel it, and lots of it, during the action phase of the game.

Once all the orders are given, you'll see 60 seconds of real-time action, which may or may not develop according to your plans. You can pan, jump, and zoom all you like, but you cannot interfere. Those 60 seconds can be very long; more than any other game I've played, *Combat Mission* does a spooky job of replicating that adrenalized slow-motion effect that so many combat veterans have written about (and if you





Although the infantry are a bit crude-looking, the vehicles and weather conditions are superb.

haven't been in combat, just think back to your last car accident...same principle). I've broken into sweats, cursed and cheered, kicked myself in the ass for stupid orders, and experienced blinding epiphanies of insight, all within a single endless minute.

Before issuing the next set of orders, you can replay that "Mad Minute" as often as you like, from any vantage point (except that of a hidden enemy unit). It's your own private war movie, and you don't have to miss anything. These replays often divulge exciting vignettes you may have missed. (I saw a Sherman get brewed up by a panzerschreck during one action phase, but only after several replays did I see the tank's crew jump out, run into a nearby building, surprise the German anti-tank team, and kill them with carbines and .45s. Now, *that's* entertainment!)

You can issue simple orders or set up waypoints for complex maneuvers involving rotation, reverse steering, high-speed dashes, ambushes, and specific targets you want your units to engage. But since they are governed by a remarkably realistic AI based on real-world physics and sophisticated fuzzy logic, units will deviate from your orders if a new, closer, more threatening target suddenly appears. In fact, I recommend letting about half of your units rely on "opportunity" fire, since they will respond more quickly to bad surprises than units who have to decide whether or not to override your orders.

Targeting and line-of-sight are perfectly keyed to the 3D environment. By clicking for a LOS reading, you get a lot of information: range, probability of hit, accuracy of sighting, level of enemy cover, plus changes of color in the line that reveal gradations in terrain. Forward observers handle artillery and air support, and the accuracy of that support depends on what he can see. If he can't see a precise target, he can still deliver "area fire" on suspected targets. Since the engine's algorithms track every individual bullet and shell, from muzzle to impact, even a round that "misses" can cause casualties or suppression.

Combat Mission will no doubt evolve rapidly (and custom scenarios are already appearing on the Web), but given the state of technology, there are some compromises that just had to be made. The program

WITTMAN'S RAMPAGE



Here, the SS "hero" begins his solo attack on the complacent British...

If you want a vivid example of how nasty the Normandy campaign actually got, play the short but sweet "Villers-Bocage" scenario, which pits a single Tiger tank against a significant portion of the British Seventh Armored Division (the legendary "Desert Rats" of Tobruk). Commanding that lone Tiger was a living legend, Obersturmführer Michael Wittman. Lean, vulpine, and handsome, Wittman was a poster boy for the Waffen SS. He was also the greatest tank "ace" of the war. During two years of hard service on the Russian Front, he racked up 119 confirmed kills.

On the morning of June 13, 1944, Wittman attacked a British column near the town of Villers-Bocage and absolutely tore up the pea-patch. After hosing down dozens of "soft" trucks, half-tracks, and Bren carriers with his machine guns (killing or wounding more than 100 men), he destroyed four Cromwells, two



...And leaves in his wake abandoned guns, mowed-down infantry and flaming British tanks.

Shermans, and three Stuarts in short order, totally paralyzing a proposed British attack. He was a marked man after that victory, however, and the British finally lured him into a trap two months later and bushwhacked him from all sides, literally pounding his Tiger to scrap. (Yesss — Rob)

pushes more polygons than *Quake II*, and the vehicles generally look fine, but the animated soldiers are still quite stylized and cartoony. Shell bursts resemble the generic "spewing triangles" of yore. And the freedom of viewpoint conferred when you goose your mouse around can be downright dizzying until you get used to it. There will come a time when all the soldiers, buildings, and tanks can be rendered photo-realistically, but in the meantime, *Combat Mission* delivers a near ideal combination of historically accurate detail and smooth playability. More excitingly, perhaps, it breaks apart the existing mold and points toward the wargames of the future.

Even in the space of a two-page review, there's not enough room even to list —

much less describe — all the goodies packed into this outstanding game. Just go to www.battlefront.com and give 'em your \$45. You will not be sorry.

— William R. Trotter

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Real warfare in 3D; lots of features; forces you to master real tactics; splendid manual; great fun.

LOWS: Currently, there is no TCP/IP mode; some graphics compromises.

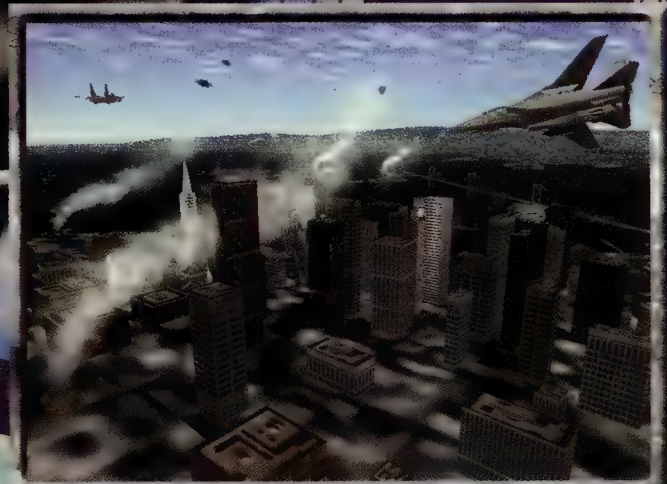
BOTTOM LINE: Fresh, and innovative; breathes new life into tired and increasingly cranky genre.

PC GAMER
EDITORS' CHOICE

91%



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CATEGORY	Real-time strategy	REQUIRED	Pii 233, 32MB RAM, 450MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	TopWare Software	WE RECOMMEND	Pii 400, 64MB RAM, 786 MB hard-drive space
PUBLISHER	Mattel Interactive	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	8

Earth 2150

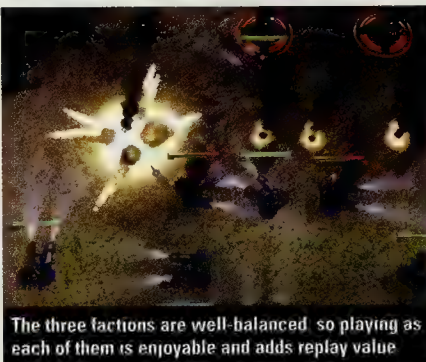


This is the best thing to happen to the real-time strategy genre in a long time — and it's a lot of fun, too.

A lot of people have spent years deriding the real-time strategy genre as a moribund stalking ground for mindless, unimaginative clones — but those naysayers have now been shown up by *Earth 2150*. It's arguably the most significant RTS game since the mold was created in 1992 with Westwood's *Dune II*.

In a post-apocalyptic future (don't worry, keep reading) Earth's orbit is quickly decaying. Three major forces square off for territory in order to harvest the enormous resource load necessary to build an evacuation fleet before the Earth spirals into the sun.

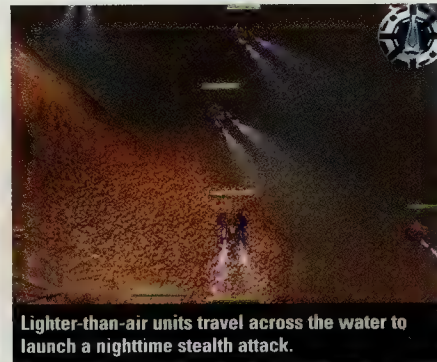
You play the campaign from one of the three combatants' perspectives, with your faction leader periodically issuing new objectives. Your tactical-level decisions about research, exploration, combat, construction, and unit creation affect the short-term goals of the objectives tree.



The three factions are well-balanced, so playing as each of them is enjoyable and adds replay value.

The genuine object-oriented 3D engine and graphics provide the most obvious difference between *Earth 2150* and other RTS games. The deformable terrain is laid out in a series of rolling hills, mountains, and forests composed of real, individual trees. Water isn't simply a blue boundary between two brown zones; it's a deep, dark, liquid chasm with shorelines. You can rotate the camera vertically or horizontally, and zoom it in and out. You can also set up two smaller camera windows, and track individual units, which helps you manage multi-front operations (always a tricky thing in RTS games).

But it's the way in which TopWare follows through on the opportunities presented by this environment that makes



Lighter-than-air units travel across the water to launch a nighttime stealth attack.

Earth 2150 such a unique and fantastic experience. Airborne units aren't simply 2D objects with rendered shadows visually hovering above a painted backdrop, for example. They can actually move into and out of buildings; and you can issue them commands that reset their distance from the planet's surface. Conversely, you can eventually acquire units that can dig complex tunnel systems, permitting genuine underground warfare.

Weather changes occur in real-time, affecting visibility and movement. There are day and night cycles, complete with fog rolling in after dusk in cooler regions. Your units and buildings respond to the oncoming night by automatically turning on their lights — though you can set them to



Feeling a little exposed? Build some walls to add some extra protection for your buildings.

IN THE YEAR 2150

How accurate a picture of the future is *Earth 2150*? We polled some staffers to get their speculations on what tomorrow will bring...



>> JEREMY
Disc Editor

This game has got it all wrong. Everyone knows the future will be all about the tyranny of JeremiCorp.



>> ROB
Editor-in-Chief

I predict the return of gladiatorial entertainment for the bloodthirsty masses. And I can't wait for it, I tell you.



>> DANIEL
Executive Editor

I don't care what the future's like, as long as they've invented x-ray glasses by then. What's the big delay?

manual, if you want to go to blackout and lessen the chances of suffering an airstrike. The environment also changes to reflect the passage of time: as Earth approaches the sun, the oceans dry up, vegetation dies, and volcanoes appear and erupt before your eyes.

Ironically, the graphics are to an extent responsible for what is the game's weakest element — its pathfinding. This is a problem in many 2D RTS games, so it's not surprising that a group of land-based units on *Earth 2150*'s 3D terrain should have trouble maneuvering across maps. Each unit evaluates terrain angle and accessible directions on its own, plotting a course that (in good travel software tradition) is sometimes the most direct route, sometimes the quickest, and sometimes the most scenic. As a result, units often enter into battle in piecemeal fashion.

Enemy AI is good, though, especially if you consider the extra strategic dimension afforded by 3D geography. Computer-driven opponents won't usually dig ditches to isolate their forces, but they perform reconnaissance and place patrols well, both building and researching sensibly. An element of fuzzy logic keeps gameplay from becoming completely predictable.

Earth 2150's sides are well-balanced. The American-style UCS (United Civilized States) forces own the latest guns; by comparison, the latter-day quasi-Soviets of the Eurasian Dynasty are primitive. However, the latter have kept their supply of old nuclear weapons, which are devastatingly effective. (As a sort of sub-game for the Soviet side, nuclear arms constitute an option that must be sparingly measured, given the certainty of further orbital degradation — after all, your main goal isn't the elimination of your allies, but the safe evacuation of your society). The third force, the



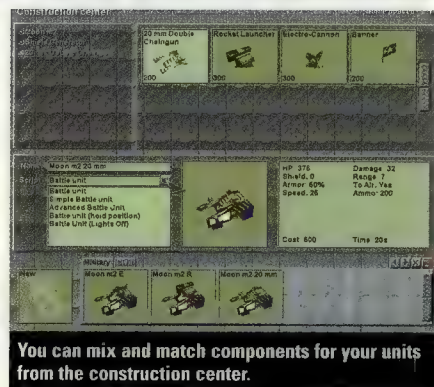
Secondary light sourcing and weather overlays effectively recreate the Ural Mountains

Lunar Corporation, is space-based and doesn't require units to harvest resources or create buildings. But they can't modify terrain, eliminating the ability to form or eliminate artificial geographical boundaries like ditches and tunnels; and much of their power, which is solar, vanishes at night.

All the factions have distinctive research trees, and they pursue individual strengths and reactive schemes to their logical conclusions. And since research is component-based, you can also customize a unit's weapon, shield and chassis systems in combination, opting for strategies that emphasize different kinds of gameplay.

The real-time screen interface is relatively easy to use. Units and buildings are designed by clicking on the right side of the screen, while all other controls are accessible through the tabbed folders at the bottom. There are also a wide variety of redefinable hotkeys. I wouldn't really call *Earth 2150* a breeze to use; it's too complex a game for that. But you can slow or pause the game anytime, examine every screen, and issue commands.

Multiplayer *Earth 2150* supports up to eight players via LAN, modem link, or the Microsoft Gaming Zone. While campaigns aren't available in multiplayer mode, you can choose from five other game types that



You can mix and match components for your units from the construction center.

include a wickedly fun competition for money or resources. There's also a map editor for generating your own quick battles, either against friends or the computer AI.

Impressive? You bet. *Earth 2150* is good enough to start its own series of uncreative clones, which we will dutifully complain about a year from now. But at the moment we have a very engaging game on hand, and I don't mind confessing that one bit.

— Barry Brenesal



Flying Mercury vehicles can provide battlefield resupply.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Brilliant use of full 3D for terrain; endlessly replayable; deep tactical engine.

LOWS: Problematic pathfinding; poor soundtrack; can be a bit complex, especially for newbies.

BOTTOM LINE: A first-rate RTS game that just may revitalize the genre.

PC GAMER

EDITORS' CHOICE

90%

CATEGORY	Adventure	REQUIRED	P166, 32MB RAM (64MB for Win98), 5MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	France Telecom/Canal+	WE RECOMMEND	PII 450, 128MB RAM, 16X CD-ROM or higher
PUBLISHER	Dreamcatcher Int.	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	1

Dracula Resurrection

Is it really possible for a French game that combines a Dracula tale with point-and-click gameplay to be decent? Surely not.

Like it or not, the French have been keeping the ailing adventure game genre alive over the past few years. Publisher Dreamcatcher Interactive, which has now positioned itself as "The Adventure Company," is bringing many of these games to this side of the pond for those who still yearn for our industry's oldest genre. Its latest offering is *Dracula Resurrection*, and it's bloody fun.

The game begins seven years after the end of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, which ended with the alleged defeat of Count Dracula and the rescue of Mina Harker by her husband Jonathan. The Harkers have been living happily in England when one day Jonathan finds a note from Mina saying she can no longer resist "the calling." After following her to Transylvania, he realizes that the Prince of Darkness is still very much alive.

BROKE-ASS VAMPIRES

Vampires are supposed to be scary, but here are some cinema vampires that we're fairly confident we could take in a dark alley...



JASON PATRIC

The Lost Boys
Was anyone afraid of this Teen Beat nancy-boy when he sprouted fangs?



VALEK

Vampires
I can't believe it took James Woods so long to kick this Euro-punk's ass.



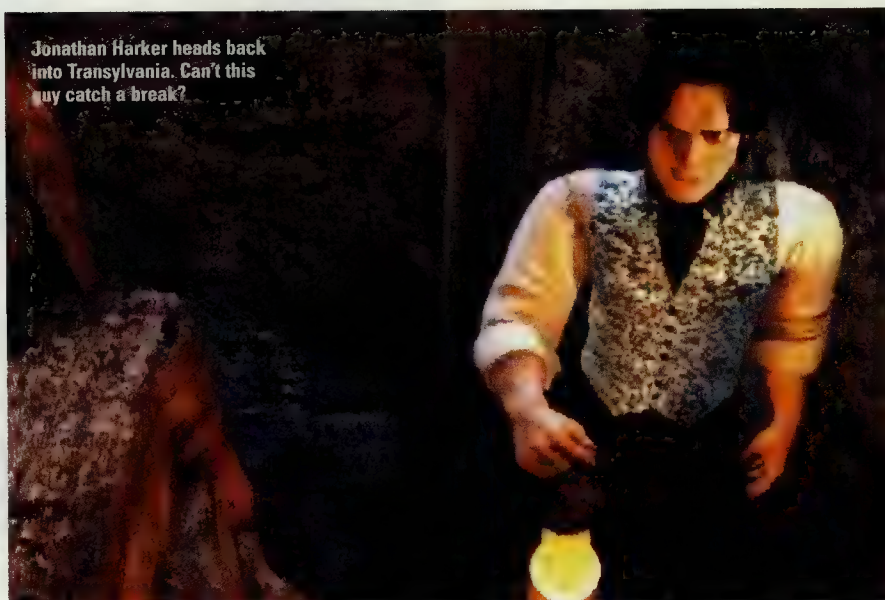
BLACULA

Blacula
We realize it's a blaxploitation comedy, but this vampire is just poor.



JENNY WRIGHT

Near Dark
This is actually one vampire we wouldn't mind taking in a dark alley.



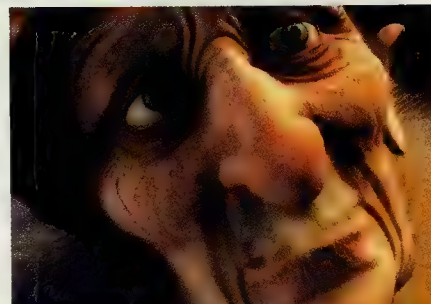
Jonathan Harker heads back into Transylvania. Can't this guy catch a break?

Dracula Resurrection is a traditional graphical adventure where you navigate the 3D game world, talk to characters, and solve puzzles along the way. It's played from a first-person perspective with the left mouse-button used to walk and select items, and the right mouse-button bringing up the inventory. Movement is somewhat limited — you take animated "steps" from one location to another — but to the game's credit, it features a 360-degree "Phoenix VR" engine so you can look around and soak up the atmosphere.

And as with many French-made games, there's atmosphere in spades. The game's beautifully rendered characters and environments are only outdone by its haunting music, incredible sound effects, and convincing voice acting. Quite frankly, the many cinematic cut-scene sequences threaded throughout the story are some of the best I've ever seen. Even more impressive is the fact that all of this runs on a modest mid-range Pentium, with a paltry four-megabyte install (and no lag while trying to read off the CD).

Unfortunately, some of the puzzles don't live up to its eerie charm. Finding items often involves some serious "pixel hunting," which can be frustrating since many of the locations are almost pitch dark. (Of course it's dark; it's a frickin' *Dracula* game, Saltzman — Ed.) Secondly, most of the puzzles are novice-level, which may frustrate veterans. The game can be completed in about 20 hours.

My only other beef with *Dracula Resurrection* is that it's a tad misleading — there are very few actual encounters with



The characters are some of the best-rendered you've ever seen, with beautiful texturing.

vampires in the game (or *Dracula* himself). Even still, the story and pacing will keep you hanging on for the climactic cliffhanger.

With so few options in the genre, *Dracula Resurrection's* shortcomings can be overlooked, and if you're itching for a solid adventure-thriller to play with the lights turned low and the speakers cranked, this is it.

— Marc Saltzman

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Incredible atmosphere; top-notch sound effects and music; gorgeous 3D graphics.

LOWS: Pixel hunting; some really easy puzzles; shortage of vampires.

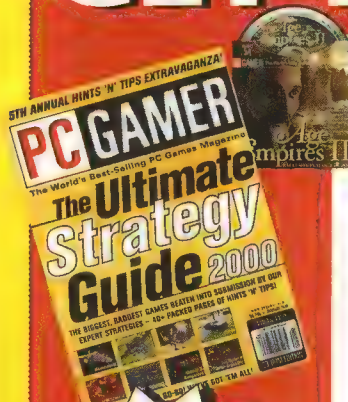
BOTTOM LINE: A game that proves there's plenty of blood left in this genre.

PC GAMER

79%

GOOD

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The World's Best-Selling PC Games Magazine

PC GAMER

CATEGORY	Arcade	REQUIRED	P133, 16MB RAM, 120MB hard-drive space
DEVELOPER	Gromada	WE RECOMMEND	PII 450, 64MB RAM
PUBLISHER	Bethesda Softworks	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	4

Gromada

Will *Gromada: The Revenge* usurp *Tetris* as the ultimate Russian arcade diversion? The answer is *Nyet*.

Had *Gromada: The Revenge* been released back in 1995, it may have been worth recommending, but as it stands now, it's a day late and several dollars too many.

Created by a Russian development team of the same name, *Gromada* is a top-down perspective arcade game in which you pilot a tank around a hostile planet, battling alien ships and indigenous life forms. U.S. publisher Bethesda felt it necessary to tack on a story and purpose to this simple concept through its website, since it's

VELTSIN'S ANALYSIS



■ ■ On behalf of all Russians, I would like to sincerely apologize for *Gromada*. The developers have been sent to the Gulag. Please remember that we also gave you *Tetris*. ■ ■

certainly nowhere to be found in the game (there are only brief and cryptic text instructions prior to each of the 20-odd levels).

Your customizable tank, dubbed "Kassandra," can carry up to four different weapon types (including machine guns, laser cannons and self-guided rockets), and in later stages of the game can be outfitted with several different chassis as well. In between levels, you can visit the Service Bay to make optional changes to Kassandra before resuming. Here you add the additional fun goodies that improve your killing punch.

Controlling the tank is easy enough, unless you opt for the mouse instead of using the four arrow keys. Then the brutal pathfinding AI will get you stuck behind trees, alien flora, and other objects at almost every turn in the maze-like environments.

The missions juggle various search, destroy, and navigation objectives. The mix of raw action and tactical know-how needed to navigate the planet's many obstacles can be quite fun and challenging at times. And to the game's credit, the missions aren't repetitive at all and do



Hey everybody, it's *FireFight* — but five years later and not as good!

increase in difficulty; plus, there are lots of well-hidden power-ups and tank add-ons.

Graphically, the game features only two resolutions to choose from — 640x480 or 800x600 — and all the environments look pretty much the same, save maybe for slightly different color schemes and a few different objects littered on the map. The explosions look pretty good, however.

While *Gromada* supports multiplayer play, I was unable to join in any online games, because the Internet option is for IP-address and there's no one playing this game. Nor is there any support from popular gaming networks. And like most PC gamers, I don't have a LAN at home to play alongside or against friends. Allegedly, the game supports up to four players in deathmatch play with a few multiplayer-only maps. But like I said, I wouldn't know because there doesn't seem to be any way to play it online.

Other beefs with *Gromada* include a finicky camera that blocks off areas of the screen (leading to surprise attacks from enemies), the inability to save during levels, and the complete lack of any music whatsoever.

Even though *Gromada* is suitable for players of all ages and doesn't require a fast PC to run, it suffers greatly from lack of polish and originality. Even for a nostalgic dip into the past, there are much better (and similar) offerings out there in cyberspace, including the classic *FireFight* shareware hit from Epic Games.

—Marc Saltzman



There are more than 25 different kinds of buildings, enemy vehicles and dangerous plants to fight against in *Gromada*.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Easy to learn; modest system requirements; suitable for players of all ages.

LOWS: Outdated game design; no story; horrible pathing AI; no music; no in-level saves.

BOTTOM LINE: Despite a few fun moments, *Gromada*'s weaknesses are too many to forgive.

PC GAMER **39%**
DON'T BOTHER

CATEGORY	Action	REQUIRED	P166, 64MB RAM, 3MB hard-drive space, Direct3D card
DEVELOPER	Pterodon	WE RECOMMEND	P11 400, 128MB RAM, 500MB hard-drive space, AGP card
PUBLISHER	Take 2 Interactive	MAXIMUM PLAYERS	8

Flying Heroes

Unreal Tournament meets Drakan meets Magic Carpet meets my trash bin. Okay, maybe that's a bit too harsh.

It's easy to see where the inspiration for this Pterodon-developed action game originated. Just take the tournament concept made big by *Unreal Tournament*, the flying dragon dueling from *Drakan*, and top it off with a dash of *Magic Carpet*'s magical airborne quirkiness. Now don't screw it up...doh, too late.

Flying Heroes takes place in the "not too distant past" in a land called Hesperia. It is a time of strife and civil war for this fantasy realm until a prophet named Atlanton II shows up and decrees that all feuds will be resolved through Air Battles. Hesperia's citizenry is now at peace, with brutal gladiatorial air combat replacing Judge Judy as the solver of conflicts. Coming soon on a Fox network near you?

Anyway, *Flying Heroes* uses a graphics engine that looks remarkably like *Drakan*, which is a good thing. As you fly around on your chosen means of well-armed air transportation, you'll be treated to some terrific vistas. There are grand castles, deep valleys, towering mountains, and cascading waterfalls — everything you need to make a very successful line of postcards.

BETTER FLYING HEROES

In the spirit of giving, here's our suggestions for some better flying-hero games.



WONDER WOMAN

You always would be able to see the edges of her invisible jet, but otherwise this would be a bad-ass action game.



THE FLYING NUN

Mixing *Flying Heroes* with *Messiah*, Sister Bertrille dispenses God's wrath on the sinners below.



MAJOR KONG

We play as Dr. Strangelove's hick bombardier, rodeo-riding atom bombs to their targets. Now that's gaming.



You'll get the chance to fly around some extravagant indoor settings as well as take to the great outdoors.

The character models are unique — well, bizarre might be a better word. At the beginning, you join with one of four teams, each with its own flying vehicles. This is where it gets weird; vehicles range from the typical (flying carpets, dragons) to the screwy (flying teapots, barrels, and giant pigeons). After selecting your team, you're given an entry-level vehicle/animal and proceed to compete in tournaments for money, with which you can upgrade your weapons, learn new magical spells, and buy new rides. There's nothing mind-blowing about the design, but it's fun.

Unfortunately, one major flaw bites a big chunk out of this game's score: control. While *Drakan* felt smooth and intuitive, controlling your ride in *Flying Heroes* can be pure torture. Mouse control feels mushy, the shifting camera angles fail to keep the action in the best perspective, and it gives an uneasy, awkward sensation at best. Another problem is that the game is just a bit too silly. Sure, creativity is a plus, but a flying teapot? This kind of design decision doesn't help the game jell. In its attempt to combine attributes from different games, it seems to lose what made each of them interesting. *Flying Heroes* just didn't give me an incentive to keep playing. Sure, the new rides and new weapons help, but the play modes get dull fairly quickly.

Simple game modes from the standard free-for-all deathmatch, to Tag, where everyone tries to keep from being "it" for as long as possible, aren't at all inventive. There's also



If you're ever short on cash, you can visit the local loan shark for a loan. Just don't make late payments!

a few other modes with basic quests and item-gathering, but no imagination.

Flying Heroes isn't terrible, but when you start playing, you'll think of 20 things that would have made it better. As a result, *Flying Heroes* flew straight off of my hard drive.

— Li C. Kuo

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Nice graphics engine; lots of creativity in the types of vehicles available.

LOWS: Clunky controls; a little too much silliness; adds nothing new to its genre.

BOTTOM LINE: This is nothing spectacular; *Flying Heroes* is just another game that'll come and go.

PC GAMER

51%

MERELY OKAY



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STAPLES

SEPTEMBER 2000

HARDSTUFF

THE ULTIMATE MONTHLY GUIDE TO GAMING GEAR



PC GAMER'S

FOR YOUR HARDWARE ONLY

JAMES BOND ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WITH COOL GADGETS



Vederman, Greg Vederman

As a bit of inside information, the photo shoot for this month's hardware cover was a grueling experience. The shoot I did with Tiffany (the young lady that appeared on the HS cover the last two months) was relatively quick and painless. This one, on the other hand, took more than six hours! There were just so many poses and outfits to deal with. I think the effort paid off, though. While I ended up looking like a total dork, Janet, the woman I'm pictured with, looks fantastic, and I think we managed to capture the feel we were going for.

As for the meaty bits of the Hard Stuff, I've taken a look at a few new gadgets for your upgrading pleasure this month. Creative sent its new 32MB GeForce 2 GTS card, and Hercules (Guillemot) sent both of theirs, too — 32MB and 64MB versions! Just in the nick of time, Plextor sent its amazing new E-IDE 12/10/32x CD-RW drive. And to round things out this month, I've also tested a budget-minded Talon system from Falcon Northwest.

So, if anyone out there asks you how you take your hardware this month, you can tell them, "Shaken — not stirred." They won't know what in the world you're talking about, but I had to close with a Bond line of some sort or another, didn't I?

Greg Vederman, Technical Editor

HSNEWS

POWVRV SERIES 3: KYRO..... PAGE 125
Just when you thought you'd seen the last of PowerVR technology, STMicro is gearing up to release a new card based on Imagination Technologies' third generation of the PowerVR architecture.

HSREVIEWS

FALCON NORTHWEST TALON..... PAGE 127
A relatively inexpensive gaming system from Falcon? Say it ain't so!

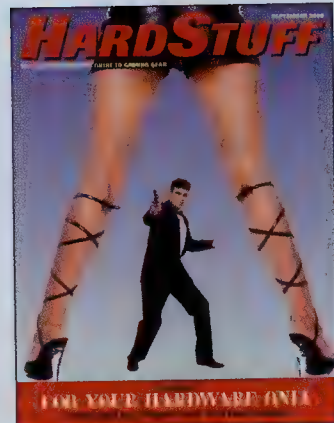
PLEXTOR PLEXWRITER12/10/32A..... PAGE 128
Fast, faster, fastest. This new CD-RW from Plextor rocks our world.

HERCULES 3D PROPHET II GTS (32 & 64MB)..... PAGE 132
Hercules (Guillemot) has not one, but two new GeForce 2 GTS cards!

CREATIVE LABS ANNIHILATOR 2..... PAGE 133
Showing up later to the party than many of its competitors, Creative has now released its own GeForce 2 GTS card.

HSTECHQ&A

CATS, DOGS, AND DSL...WHAT A COMBINATION!..... PAGE 134



HARD STUFF PHOTOS BY AARON LAUER

How We Rate the Hard Stuff

You've been around long enough to know the greatest technology doesn't mean a thing unless it improves the games you love to play. Our reviews focus on real-world testing, but when a number is in order for comparisons, we use the benchmarking tools developed by our hardware-frenzied sister publication *Maximum PC*. Between our testing and the BenchMarks, you'll get the straight story.

HSTRINITY

Welcome to a BRAVE NEW WORLD

So you want to build a new PC, huh? As you may know, it can be a tricky affair. Luckily, Hard Stuff editor Greg Vederman is here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below reflect the lowest prices we could find as we went to press (obtained almost entirely from www.pricewatch.com).

ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM

PRICE: ROUGHLY \$999

CASE: 300 watt ATX form factor	\$100
PROCESSOR: Intel Celeron 533MHz PPGA	\$95
MOTHERBOARD: A-Bit BE6	\$106
MEMORY: 128 MB PC-100 SDRAM	\$108
PPGA (SOCKET 370) CONVERTER: AB-RS370	\$15
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM: Hi-Val 6X Pioneer DVD-ROM drive w/software DVD decoding	\$115
FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE: 10.2GB Maxtor DiamondMax 6800	\$115
SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! Value	\$36
MODEM: 3COM #5685 56K v. 90	\$85
MONITOR: 17" Optquest Q71	\$170
VIDEO CARD: 3dfx Voodoo3 3000	\$83
JOYSTICK: Logitech WingMan Digital	\$17
GAMEPAD: Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad	\$23
SPEAKERS: Labtech LCS-2414	\$35
KEYBOARD: Addtronics	\$15
USB MOUSE: Logitech or Microsoft	\$39
TOTAL	\$1,165

MID-RANGE SYSTEM

PRICE: ROUGHLY \$1,800

CASE: 300 watt ATX form factor	\$100
PROCESSOR: Intel Pentium III 700MHz	\$338
or AMD Athlon 700MHz	\$151
MOTHERBOARD: Intel - Asus P3C-E	\$166
AMD - Asus K7V	\$138
MEMORY: 128MB PC-100 SDRAM	\$108
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM: Creative Labs Encore 8X with Dxr3	\$189
FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE: 20.4GB Maxtor DiamondMax	\$117
SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+	\$69
MODEM: 3COM #5685 56K v. 90	\$85
MONITOR: 19" Optquest Q95	\$299
VIDEO CARD: C32MB GeForce 256	\$128
JOYSTICK: Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro	\$53
GAMEPAD: Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad	\$23
SPEAKERS: Cambridge SoundWorks FPS 1000	\$70
KEYBOARD: Addtronics	\$15
USB MOUSE: Logitech or Microsoft	\$39
TOTALS Intel PIII-based	\$1,837
AMD Athlon-based	\$1,592

HIGH-END SYSTEM

PRICE: \$3,000 AND ABOVE

CASE: 300 watt ATX form factor	\$100
PROCESSOR: Intel Pentium 933MHz	\$776
or AMD Athlon 1GHz	\$839
MOTHERBOARD: Intel - Asus P3C-E	\$166
AMD - Asus K7V	\$138
MEMORY: 256MB RDRAM	\$1,105
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM: Pioneer HDVD10AS-00R1 10X DVD-ROM with MPG2 card	\$259
FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE: Maxtor 40GB Ultra 66 EIDE	\$235
SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+	\$69
MODEM: 3COM #5685 56K v.90	\$85
MONITOR: 19" Optquest Q95	\$299
VIDEO CARD: NVIDIA GeForce 2 GTS	\$211
JOYSTICK: Saitek X36 Flight Control System (USB)	\$96
GAMEPAD: Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad	\$23
SPEAKERS: Klipsch ProMedia v.2-400	\$249
KEYBOARD: Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	\$75
USB MOUSE: Original IntelliMouse with IntelliEye technology	\$55
TOTALS Intel PIII-based	\$3,569
AMD Athlon-based	\$3,031

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Kingston 128MB SDRAM (PC-133)
Floppy Drive 1.44MB
15GB 7200RPM Hard Drive Ultra ATA100
Nvidia GeForce w/32MB DDR Video Card
SoundBlaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card
Cambridge FPS1000 Digital Subwoofer/Speaker System
56X EIDE CD-ROM Player
Hydraulic ATX Mid-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
104-Enhanced Keyboard PS/2
Microsoft Intellimouse PS/2
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Microsoft Windows '98 SE OS
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Optimized & Configured for High-Performance
FREE FUNC Technical Surface Pad

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Financing starting as low as: \$36.00/Mo., 60Mos

HIVE-MIND

AMD Thunderbird 950MHz Processor w/256K High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System
Asus A7V KT133 Chipset Motherboard w/6PCI Slots
Kingston 128MB SDRAM (PC-133)
Floppy Drive 1.44MB
20GB 7200RPM Hard Drive Ultra ATA 100
Nvidia GeForce2 GTS 32MB DDR Video Card
SoundBlaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card
Altec Lansing ACS54 Gaming 5-Piece Subwoofer/Speaker System
Pioneer 16X/40X DVD Player
Hydraulic ATX Mid-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
104-Enhanced Keyboard PS/2
Microsoft Intellimouse PS/2
US Robotics V.90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem
Microsoft Windows '98 SE OS
Personalized Technical Support Manual
Optimized & Configured for High-Performance
FREE FUNC Technical Surface Pad

PRICE: \$2,299.00

Financing starting as low as: \$52.00/Mo., 60Mos

AREA 51: AURORA

AMD Thunderbird 1000MHz Processor w/256K High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System
Asus A7V KT133 Chipset Motherboard w/6PCI Slots
Kingston 256MB SDRAM (PC-133)
Black Floppy Drive 1.44MB
40GB 7200RPM Hard Drive Ultra ATA100
Nvidia GeForce2 GTS 64MB DDR Video Card
SoundBlaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card
Klipsch 4.1 ProMedia v.2-400 THX 400-Watt Subwoofer/Speaker System
Pioneer 16X/40X DVD Player
HP 9300i CDR-W 10x/4x/32x CD Writer
Hydraulic Black ATX Mid-Tower Case w/300 Watt PS
Black 107-Enhanced Keyboard PS/2
Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer
US Robotics V.90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem
Microsoft Windows '98 SE OS
Personalized Technical Support Manual
Optimized & Configured for High-Performance
FREE FUNC Technical Surface Pad

PRICE: \$3,299.00

Financing starting as low as: \$79.00/Mo., 60Mos

MONITORS

17" Viewsonic G773 26dp add:	\$295.00
19" Viewsonic Q95 23dp add:	\$335.00
19" Viewsonic E790B 26dp add:	\$395.00
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POWER VR GENERATION3: KYRO

Will the third time be the charm?

In a move that caught us by surprise, STMicro announced that it will soon release a new card based on Imagination Technologies' previously unknown third generation PowerVR architecture. Dubbed KYRO, this new card will use the same tile-based rendering system used in both first and second generations of the technology — the latter of the two having been used in Sega's Dreamcast gaming console and the Neon 250 graphics accelerator. This tile-based design allows the KYRO to render only those polygons that can be seen by the viewer, thus cutting down greatly on memory bandwidth and allowing for almost "free" full-scene anti-aliasing (FSAA) even at high resolutions.

Performance estimates place the KYRO at somewhere between GeForce 256 and GeForce 2 GTS levels, and while the card doesn't offer anything quite as fancy as a T&L engine (Transform and Lighting), it will offer a rich feature-set including 32-bit color rendering, 2x and 4x FSAA, 8-layer multi-texturing (*Wow! — Ed.*), and D3D environment bump mapping — all at an estimated street price of less than \$200. Additionally, the card will function under both D3D and OpenGL, AGP 2X and 4X, and will initially ship with 32MB

of SDRAM, with a 64MB card possible down the road. Given the way tile-based rendering works, however, it's unlikely that having a "mere" 32MB of video memory will be any problem for KYRO — even when running the latest, most graphically intense games.

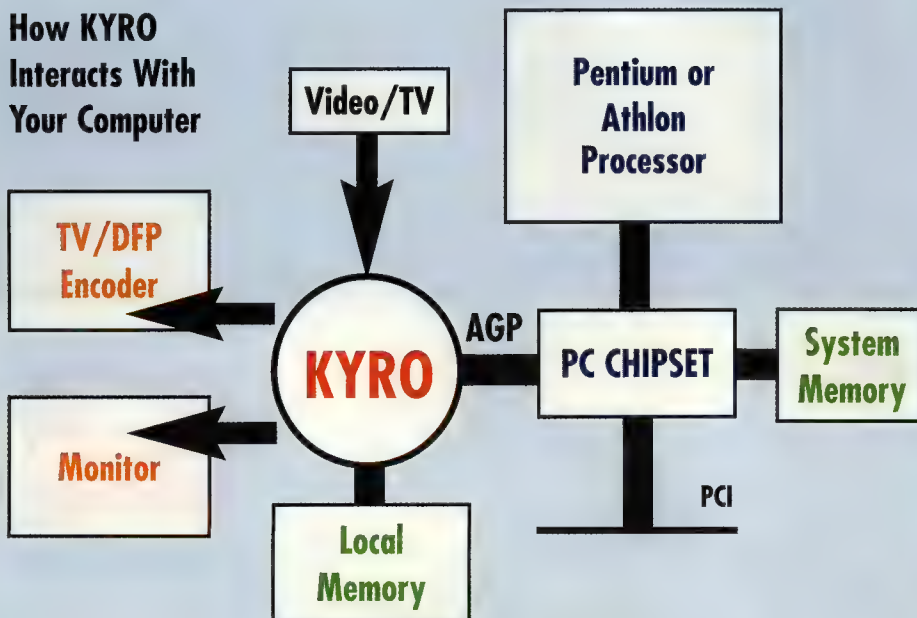


Why release this card now, when cards like the Voodoo5 and GeForce 2 are burning up the charts? "Customers are clamoring for a graphics solution with excellent image quality and a complete modern feature set at a reasonable cost," says Tim Chambers, VP and general manager of ST's Graphics Business Unit. "The KYRO technology intrinsically provides these benefits, due to its high performance and low-cost frame-store

technology. Developers can finally create rich environments at high frames, as KYRO's tile-based rendering approach takes care of increased scene complexity."

Amazingly, even though we've just now learned of KYRO, production quality silicon is already being shipped to OEMs, and the final retail product could be on shelves as early as the time that you're reading this issue. Expect a full review of the KYRO as soon as we get our hands on the final product.

How KYRO Interacts With Your Computer



techtidbits

Just as we were about to close this issue, we received some tasty info from TEAC announcing its upcoming 12x10x32 CD-RW drive. Just like the **Plextor 12/10/32A** reviewed in this issue, the TEAC drive writes media at 12X, rewrites media at 10X, and plays CD-ROMs, CD-R, and CD-RWs at 32X (average). The 12x10x32 is Windows 95/98 and Windows 2000 compatible and **will include everything needed to begin creating CDs** at installation. TEAC's latest 12x10x32 CD-RW will be available in both an IDE/ATAPI and a Fast SCSI-2 model will be out at the end of the third quarter of 2000.

IBM has unveiled a technology that **doubles the memory capacity of computer servers**. Named IBM Memory eXpansion Technology (MXT), it could eventually be adapted for personal computers, but it is initially designed for Intel-based industry-standard PC servers.

MXT is a hardware implementation that automatically stores frequently accessed data and instructions close to a computer's microprocessors so they can be accessed immediately — **significantly improving performance**. Less frequently accessed data and instructions are compressed and stored in memory instead of on a disk — **increasing memory capacity by a factor of two or more**. This could be cool...if and when it makes it over to the consumer PC market.

Both Intel and AMD have some new CPUs you should know about. For starters, Intel's newest **Celerons** now contain the same core as the PIII, meaning that, like their big brothers, **they'll come standard with Intel's Streaming SIMD instructions** and should be a bit faster when playing the newest games. These new Celerons will initially ship at 533, 566, and 600MHz. AMD's "Celeron killer" is called **Duron**, and similar in nature to the Celeron, it's basically a **full-blown Athlon** with less cache memory. These new chips will debut at 600, 650, and 700MHz.

Microsoft has just announced that Windows ME (Millennium Edition), the follow-up to Windows 98, has just gone gold and should be on store shelves September 14, 2000. **Should you upgrade right away? Probably not** — wait a while for any initial bugs to be ironed out and then pounce.

I don't know really how to say this, but I had a few doubts about the buzz on your new RADEON™ and RADEON™ DDR gamer boards. I checked out your so-called RADEON™ GPU with its integrated T&L acceleration and ultra-fast DDR to speed up my Quake™ III Arena framerates. Not only does RADEON™ have awesome high-quality performance but it supports more advanced 3D games and upcoming DirectX™ 8.0 features than any other graphics board. The DVD playback feature will come in handy when I need to take a break from gaming. And, I have to admit the video capture and TV-output option on RADEON™ DDR makes it a must-have. But, just remember, the only opinion of RADEON™ that matters is mine and I have only one thing to say to you ATI



Gimme RADEON!



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PRICE

\$1,495 (w/o monitor or
speakers)

OTHER OPTIONS

The Talon is a great deal, but Falcon isn't the only top-notch PC builder out there. Take a look at what Alienware (www.alienware-pc.com) and Hypersonic (www.hypersonic-pc.com) are offering in the same price range.

SYSTEM SPECS

SYSTEM

Processor: 700MHz
AMD Athlon
Motherboard: Asus K7V
Memory: 128MB PC-100
SDRAM RAM

STORAGE

Hard Drive: 15.3GB
Western Digital, 7200
RPM ATA66
CD-ROM: Toshiba 48X
Drive, UDMA 2

EXPANSION

Internal 5.25" bays: 3
(1 used)
External 5.25" bays: 3
(1 used)
Internal 3.5" bays: 5
(2 used)
External 3.5" bays: 2
(2 used)
Bus Slots: 1 AGP (full), 4
PCI (3 used), 1 shared
ISA/PCI (free)
RAM: 3 DIMM sockets
(1 used)

VIDEO

Primary Display
Adapter: 32MB
Guillemot 3D Prophet
(GeForce 256)
Monitor: None (optional)

AUDIO

Sound Card: Creative
Labs Sound Blaster
Live! Value
Speakers: None (optional)

OTHER

Modem: 3Com
Hardware Modem, 56k
V.90
Mouse: Microsoft
Intellimouse (PS/2)
Mousepad Surface: Black
EverGlide Attack Pad
with Falcon logo
printed on it

Holy crap! We're floored! We're in awe! We're in love! Falcon Northwest, builders of some of the fastest gaming systems of all time, has come out with a new "budget-minded" line of PCs known as Talon. This line comes in a couple of different configurations, and the one we were sent was the 1.8 (you'll want to check Falcon's website for the other models). While this system isn't exactly in the realm of the inexpensive, for what you're getting, and given who makes it, it's a steal!

Much like the \$4,299 Mach V Falcon sent to us for our December 1999 issue (you know...the old days, when a 700MHz Athlon was brand-spankin' new), this system comes equipped with only the best, most reliable components money can buy — many of them the same (like the processor), or better than were used in the Mach V!

Unlike Falcon's newer high-end systems, the Talon 1.8 doesn't come with the world's fastest processor (currently a 1GHz CPU), but the 700MHz Athlon is certainly no slouch. In other joyous news, the video card, a Hercules GeForce-powered 3D Prophet has also dropped in price sufficiently since the arrival of the GeForce 2 and Voodoo 5 to make it into the Talon. It too was in the Mach V of "old." For those of you that might still be concerned about lingering Athlon/GeForce compatibility issues, the Talon now comes with an Asus K7V that sports the newer VIA KX-133 chipset that has none of the compatibility issues of its predecessor.

No corners were cut on the rest of the components, either; you get all sorts of goodies like 128MB SDRAM, a 15.3GB hard drive, Sound Blaster Live! Value, 56k v.90

3Com hardware modem (i.e. not a Winmodem), a 48x Toshiba CD-ROM drive, a nice mouse and keyboard, and arguably the coolest thing — a recovery CD. Once upon a time, it was only retail computers that offered such a disc — one that allows you to restore the contents of your hard drive to like-new condition in the event of a Windows meltdown. These days, just about every high-end gaming PC builder includes one, but it's not something we were expecting to see in a budget system.

As for performance, this system is every bit as fast as the older Mach V — if not faster in some areas due to having newer, more robust drivers and a much better motherboard than was available at the time of our last review. Speaking of numbers and speed, if you're a long-time

reader of the Hard Stuff, you may have already looked down and noticed that we've added MDK2 to our benchmark suite; we did this for a very good reason. These days, when video card manufacturers are creating OpenGL drivers, they tend to optimize for Quake III, since it's the game everyone in the known universe uses to gauge OpenGL performance. Since MDK2 also uses OpenGL, we think it'll add some extra balance to the benchmarks we already have.

Like any brand name computer, you're going to pay a bit more for the Talon than if you built a similar system yourself — but not much more. Plus, by spending the extra cash, you're getting a system built by Falcon Northwest — one of the industry's premiere gaming system integrators! These guys know how to squeeze every bit of performance out of their computers, and you'll be delighted with the results.

BENCHMARKS

3DMARK 99 MAX (D3D)

(all tests run in 16-bit color with 16-bit Z and triple buffer)
• 3DMarks: 2,320
• Game 1 Helicopter
Low Detail: 43.3fps
Med Detail: 31.7fps
High Detail: 16.0fps
• Game 2 Adventure
Low Detail: 39.6fps
Med Detail: 36.1
High Detail: 26.8
Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 233.1 million texels per second

3DMARK 2000 (D3D)

(all tests run at 1024x768 in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z and triple buffer)
• 3DMarks: 2,320
• Game 1 Helicopter
Low Detail: 43.3fps
Med Detail: 31.7fps
High Detail: 16.0fps
• Game 2 Adventure
Low Detail: 39.6fps
Med Detail: 36.1
High Detail: 26.8
Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 233.1 million texels per second

QUAKE III (OPENGL)

(all tests run in 32-bit color with all graphic effects set to max)
640x480: 80.8fps
800x600: 56.3fps
1024x768: 34.0fps
1600x1200: 13.42fps

MDK2 (OPENGL)

(all tests run in 32-bit color with textures set to max detail; trilinear filtering and T&L enabled)
800x600: 61.49fps
1024x768: 37.22fps
1600x1200: 13.42fps

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Great price; terrific components; recovery disc included.

LOWS Kelt Reeves once put a goofy picture of himself in one of his Falcon ads — that's about it.

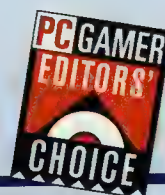
BOTTOM LINE For once, the word "budget" isn't synonymous with "crap." Rest assured, you're getting plenty of bang for your buck with the Talon.



PLEXTOR

PlexWriter 12/10/32A

Faster than a speeding bullet; more powerful than a locomotive...it's PlexWriter!



COMPANY

Company: Plextor,
(800) 886-3935,
www.plextor.com

PRICE

\$499 (M.S.R.P.)

OTHER OPTIONS

Other Options: So you want a burner but don't have \$500 to spend on one? Plextor may be the best, but it isn't your only choice. Companies like Hewlett Packard (www.hewlettpackard.com) and Creative Labs (www.creativelabs.com) also make good IDE CD-RWs. Check them out online and see what you think of their features and price.

For years, many people have sworn by SCSI. Its speed has been unparalleled, and for a long time, if you wanted a CD burner that was worth a damn, SCSI was where it was at. But then an interesting thing happened in 1999. While the ratio of SCSI CD-RW drives to IDE drives sold in 1998 was one-to-one, according to IDC Corporation, in 1999, IDE pulled ahead with sales two-and-a-half times greater than SCSI — largely due to the fact that 1999 was the year that Hewlett Packard started including rewriters in many of its retail systems.

For Plextor, a company that has always been praised for the quality and speed of its SCSI drives, this changeover was unexpected, but it left the door open for greatly increased volume. Now, with IDE sales skyrocketing, Plextor's newest, fastest-ever PlexWriter is here in all its E-IDE glory. A SCSI version is in the works, too, but it's still a ways out. The times, they are a changin'.

As the drive's name implies, the PlexWriter burns CD-R media at 12x, re-writes CD-RW media at 10x, and reads at a max rate of 32x. How fast is that in real-world applications? Well, we decided to burn and re-write one of our most recent *PC Gamer* CDs to find out. The disc we created was comprised of 350 files and

weighed-in at a beefy 643MBs. Burning the disc took a mere seven minutes and 29 seconds at 12x, and re-writing at 10x took only one minute longer. By comparison, the 2x CD-R drive that our disc editor, Jeremy Williams, uses to create our CD each month took a full half-hour to perform the same task. The great thing about CD-RWs is that the discs can be used over and over again just like a floppy or Zip disk. Once we copied the data to the disc, it took about eight minutes to fully erase the data, while a quick erase only took 26 seconds. After seeing just how fast this drive was, we were left utterly amazed, with our jaws dropped wide open.

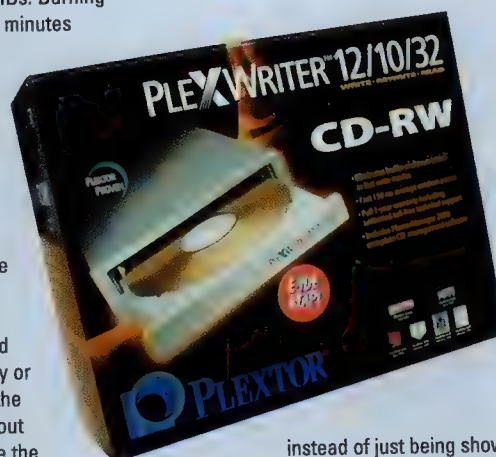
But speed isn't all the PlexWriter offers. Where most other CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, and CD-RW manufacturers use plastic gears and components in their drives, Plextor uses only metal. Yeah, it costs more, but the benefits show up in the drives' reliability and longevity. In addition, Plextor has licensed a technology called BURN-Proof that all but eliminates buffer under-run (one of the leading causes of bad burns — caused when your system stops streaming data to the drive for brief periods of time). With this feature, you should be able to surf the 'net, have *Quake III* running in the background, be playing several MP3 files at the same time, and still get exceptionally reliable burns at full-speed. We don't recommend you do this, of course, but if you want to see just how rock-solid this drive is, you could.

The good times keep coming, too. The software that ships with the

PlexWriter is the

best on the market and includes Adaptec's Easy CD

Creator Standard Edition, MVP 2000 (a utility for recording and playing both music and video), Audio Capture 2000 (an amazing utility that allows you to extract CD-Audio tracks right to your hard drive — songs on your CD are read as actual .wav files

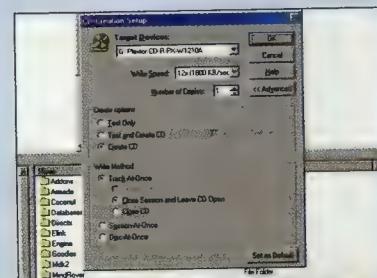


instead of just being shown as shortcuts to the songs on the CD as is the norm), and DiscDupe 2000 (a simple to use, single disc replicating program).

Before buying this drive, be aware that it prefers to be set up as a master on your secondary IDE channel. If you've got a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drive right now, your hard drive is your primary master, and your CD-ROM drive is either your primary slave or your secondary master. If the latter is the case, you're going to want to switch your jumpers around so that the PlexWriter can get "top billing" on your secondary channel. Don't let this scare you; jumper settings are always listed on drives to aid you in changing them.



PLEXWRITER 12/10/32A



With this nifty program, you'll be recording your own music CDs in no time flat.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Fastest CD-RW drive on the market; highest quality components; top-notch software.

LOWS At 500 bones, it will damn near break the bank.

BOTTOM LINE When building the system of your dreams, the PlexWriter 12/10/32 should be at the very top of your list.

WE UNDERSTAND...



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- and...

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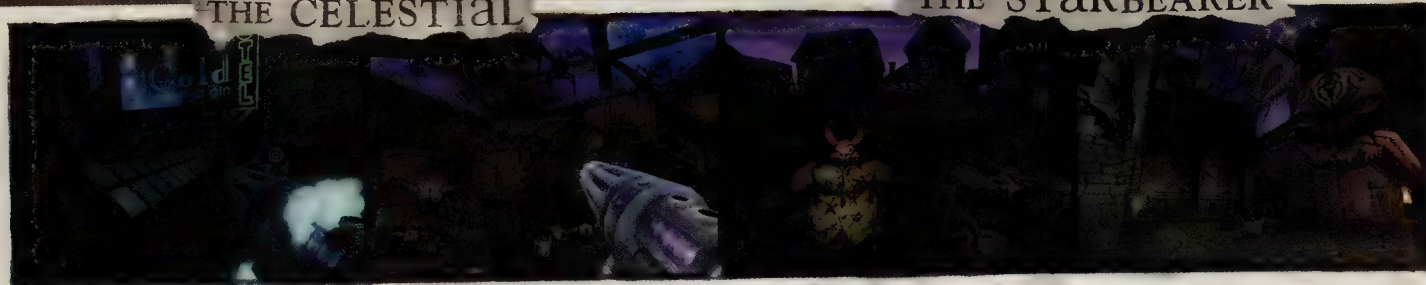
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THE STARBEARER



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Enter the Psycho Circus and transform yourself into the powerful KISS Elders from Todd McFarlane's comic book. Wield a deadly arsenal of weapons to slay the endless hordes of the vile Nightmare Child. Battle through the four hellish elemental realms to face the demon seed itself in the final Nightmare Realm. LET THE ONSLAUGHT BEGIN...

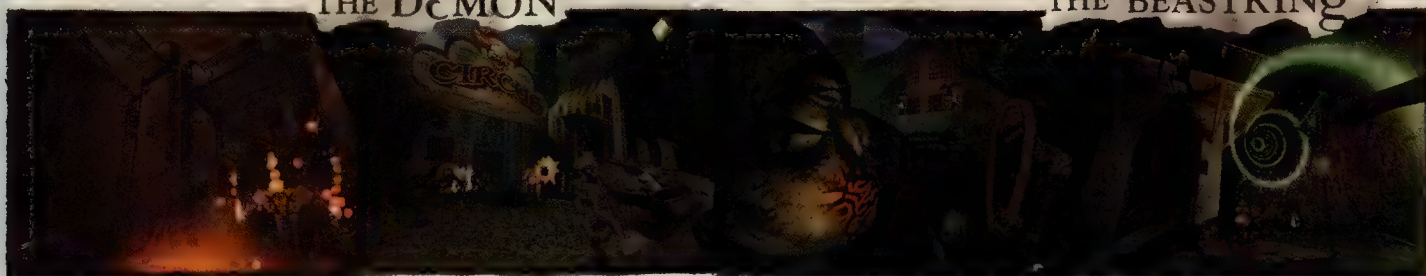
Visit SPAWN.COM for more information on the KISS Psycho Circus comic book and action figures.





THE DEMON

THE BEASTKING



"A wildly original game world, and some of the most frenetic action seen to date."

-NextGen Magazine, February 2000

DEVELOPED BY



www.kisspsychocircus.com www.godgames.com www.tremor.net

Go to www.pcgamer.com/request Product #276

■ HERCULES (GUILLEMOT)

3D Prophet II GTS (32 and 64MB)

The name may be different, but the result is the same

COMPANY

Company: Hercules
(Guillemot), (877) GUILLE-
MOT, www.hercules.com

PRICE

\$359.99 and
\$419.99 respectively
(M.S.R.P.)

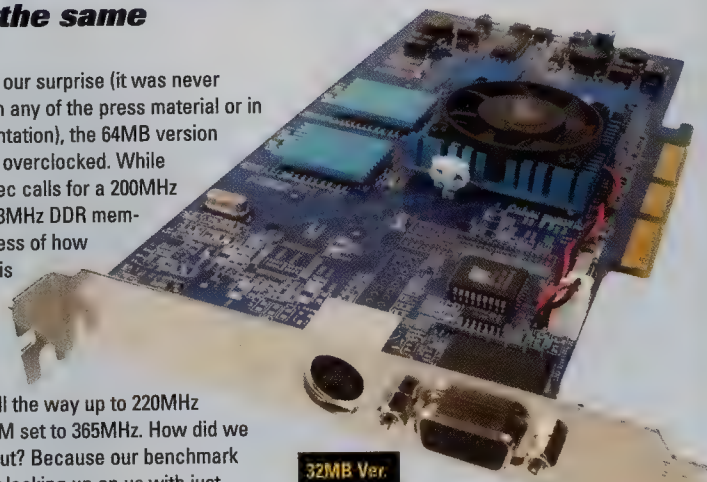
Hercules, in case you didn't know, isn't exactly dead anymore. Although it filed for Chapter 11 (bankruptcy) not all that long ago, Guillemot has since snatched up what was left of the company (basically just its name), and is now making all of its video cards under the Hercules banner since it's a better known name here in the States than Guillemot's own (plus, it's easier for everyone to pronounce).

Guillemot actually sent us two GeForce 2-powered cards for this review — a 32MB and a 64MB version. To date, both of these cards have the most radical implementation of the design we've seen. These days, most powerful 3D accelerators come with some form of heatsink or fan to keep the primary CPU cool under pressure. These two are no exception, but in an unprecedented move, Guillemot has placed heat sinks on all of the RAM modules of both cards, too! That's right... these things are built to stay super cool. In practice, however, this didn't turn out to help us much!

Much to our surprise (it was never mentioned in any of the press material or in the documentation), the 64MB version ships to you overclocked. While NVIDIA's spec calls for a 200MHz core and 333MHz DDR memory (regardless of how much there is of it), Guillemot pumped its 64MB

Prophet II all the way up to 220MHz with the RAM set to 365MHz. How did we figure this out? Because our benchmark system kept locking up on us with just about every game we tried! It was so bad that we thought our card might have been defective. After a quick glance at the Hercules Website, however, we learned of a new BIOS update for the card that reads: "This new BIOS clocks the core chipset at 200MHz and the memory at 333MHz as specified by NVIDIA's reference design. Hercules, a Certified Partner of NVIDIA, recommends that consumers use this new BIOS." Hello? We weren't aware that there had been any factory tweaking in the first place! It wasn't until we set the card up for a manual override of its clock speeds that we learned of the change. After setting the clock back down to 200MHz/333MHz (without updating our BIOS), all lock-ups and crashes ceased. We did try overclocking both cards a bit anyway (the 32MB version ships at the recommended speed to begin with, by the way), but found that neither was any more stable than other GeForce 2s that don't ship with the expensive RAM

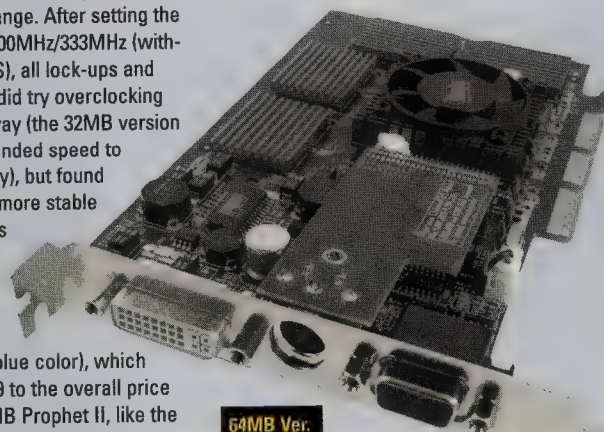
heatsinks. Other than these heatsinks (and cool blue color), which seem to add about \$9 to the overall price of the cards, the 32MB Prophet II, like the Creative Labs and Elsa boards, sticks very close to the standard reference design (with similar performance). And like Elsa's GLADIAC, both Prophet IIs come with an output for playing your PC games on your TV. The 64MB card goes one better than both by including a DVI (Digital Visual Interface) output for connecting certain digital flat panel monitors. If this is a feature you need, then this is the only GeForce 2, thus far, that will give it to you. Still, as you'll learn as soon as you look at



32MB Ver.

our benchmarks, the extra 32MB of RAM (and considerably higher price) doesn't really seem all that worthwhile given the minimal return in frame rates.

In the end, both of these cards are good, but the only one we'd recommend to most gamers is the 32MB version — and only then if you can find it for the same price or lower than GLADIAC. The extra heat sinks seem to be wasted here and overclocking the GeForce 2 — no matter how high — doesn't yield much of a performance gain at all, anyway.



64MB Ver.

BENCHMARKS

32MB VER.

3DMARK 2000 (D3D)

(all tests run in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z and tripple buffer)

• 800x600

3DMarks: 5,918

• Game 1 Helicopter

Low Detail: 125.8fps

Med Detail: 90.9fps

High Detail: 42.5fps

• Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 116.6fps

Med Detail: 73.4fps

High Detail: 44.3fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 546.5

million texels per second

• 1024x768

3DMarks: 4,222

• Game 1 Helicopter

Low Detail: 83.8fps

Med Detail: 61.0fps

High Detail: 28.7fps

• Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 78.6fps

Med Detail: 61.4fps

High Detail: 41.4fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 491.5

million texels per second

QUAKE III (OPENGL)

640x480: 110.5fps

800x600: 98.7fps

1024x768: 68.6fps

1600x1200: 25.0fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 528.4

million texels per second

MDK2 (OPENGL)

800x600: 114.23fps

1024x768: 76.27fps

1600x1200: 26.04fps

64MB VER.

3DMARK 2000 (D3D)

(all tests run in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z and tripple buffer)

• 800x600

3DMarks: 6,013

• Game 1 Helicopter

Low Detail: 127.4fps

Med Detail: 92.5fps

High Detail: 43.9fps

• Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 120.4fps

Med Detail: 73.6fps

High Detail: 44.1fps

Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 596.4

million texels per second

• 1024x768

3DMarks: 4,303

• Game 1 Helicopter

Low Detail: 85.6fps

Med Detail: 62.1fps

High Detail: 29.5fps

• Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 78.3fps

Med Detail: 61.5fps

High Detail: 41.1fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 528.4

million texels per second

QUAKE III (OPENGL)

640x480: 110.5fps

800x600: 97.5fps

1024x768: 68.1fps

1600x1200: 29.1fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 528.4

million texels per second

MDK2 (OPENGL)

800x600: 115.7fps

1024x768: 78.09fps

1600x1200: 32.78fps

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Performs as expected; cool color; 64MB card ships with DVI connector.

LOWS Expensive; added heat sinks don't seem to help much.

BOTTOM LINE If you're a millionaire, consider the 64MB Prophet II just for bragging rights; otherwise stick with the 32MB board if you find one at a good price.

CREATIVE LABS

Annihilator 2 (32MB)

COMPANY

Creative Labs,
(800) 998-1000,
www.creative.com

PRICE

\$299.99 (M.S.R.P.)

Like most of Creative's video cards, the Annihilator 2 is a rather "plain" implementation of NVIDIA's technology. This isn't a knock against it as much as it's an observation. The card itself is based on the GeForce 2 reference

design — without any deviation. And unlike the other cards we've tested thus far, this is the first to come without an output for playing your games on a TV.

By throwing out this feature, Creative is able to offer its GeForce 2 for as much as \$60 less than some of its direct competition.

Obviously, if this is an important feature for you, you're going to want to take a look at either the ELSA GLADIATOR (reviewed last

month), or one of the two new Hercules cards reviewed this month, but it's nice to have choice and save a few bucks.

Like most GeForce 2s, the Annihilator ships with a 200MHz core clock and 32MB of 166MHz DDR RAM (effectively 333MHz since DDR sends and receives data twice per cycle). You can overclock these settings slightly if you wish, but there seems to be very little difference in performance

when overclocking the GeForce 2 architecture. And much like the GLADIATOR, benchmark scores on the Annihilator are right in line with the numbers we were getting with our reference boards not so long ago.

The software package is rather bare, but ends up saving you money and redundancy since you'd likely have any full games Creative could have included.

While there isn't anything new to jump up and down for joy about here, the fact that the A2 is fast, inexpensive, and stable makes it a well-deserved Editors' Choice recipient.

BENCHMARKS

3DMARK 2000 (D3D)

(all tests run in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z and tripple buffer)

• 800x600

3DMarks: 5,922

• Game 1 Helicopter

Low Detail: 125.8fps

Med Detail: 90.6fps

High Detail: 42.5fps

• Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 116.8fps

Med Detail: 73.7fps

High Detail: 44.1fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 544.5

million texels per second

• 1024x768

3DMarks: 4,250

• Game 1 Helicopter

Low Detail: 83.6fps

Med Detail: 59.1fps

High Detail: 28.3fps

• Game 2 Adventure

Low Detail: 77.2fps

Med Detail: 62.5fps

High Detail: 41.8fps

• Fill Rate w/ multitexturing: 491.5

million texels per second

QUAKE III (OPENGL)

640x480: 111.5fps

800x600: 97.5fps

1024x768: 68.0fps

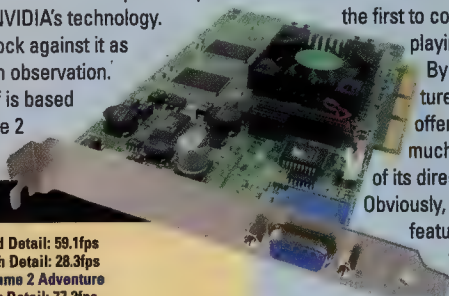
1600x1200: 26.7fps

MDK2 (OPENGL)

800x600: 115.23fps

1024x768: 76.27fps

1600x1200: 27.52fps



FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS Stellar performance at a relatively inexpensive price.

LOWS No TV-out (if that's your thing); software package isn't anything special.

BOTTOM LINE The Annihilator 2 is the "Vanilla" ice cream of GeForce 2 cards, but there ain't nothin' wrong with that when the price is so right.

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Voodoo5 5500

Q I've been thinking about buying a video card for a very long time. Instead of buying a totally new, integrated 2D/3D card, I've been considering the addition of a Voodoo2. One of my friends has a Voodoo2 and another has a Voodoo5, and I really can't see a difference between them. Are there games that won't run with the Voodoo2? Is that the big difference? In the July 2000 issue, you recommended against using a Voodoo2 as your primary 3D accelerator — is this the reason why?

— Jordan Juliano, via the Internet

A There are all sorts of reasons why the Voodoo2 isn't really viable anymore. Most games still will run on it, but they sure won't run as fast or look as good as they would on a newer, faster card with more video memory. While you may not have noticed a difference between the 2 and the 5, there are some pretty major ones if you look closely. The Voodoo5 5500 has 64MB RAM (though it behaves much more like a 32MB card because of its design), supports higher resolutions, delivers true color, and has all sorts of other cool new features. Plus, it's just a heck-of-a-lot faster than the Voodoo2. If you've got a slow CPU (like I'm guessing you might), think about upgrading that before worrying about a new video card.

Q I recently ran SiSoft's SANDRA 2000 diagnostic software (www.sisoftware.com) to see if there were any areas of my system that I could update or upgrade. Unfortunately, the results it spit back at me were a bit over my head.

For my PCI & AGP bus, it gave me the following suggestions/warnings:

1. 440BX/ZX PCI-Host Bridge (AGP Implemented): AGP Ver. 2.00 or later offers better performance.
2. Diamond Multimedia Systems Viper V550: AGP Ver 2.00 or later offers better performance
3. (Warning) Diamond MMS Viper V550: PCI Latency too high. Device could hog bus for too long.

What exactly is AGP 2.0, and how can I get it? Also, how do I change my PCI latency?

For my CPU & BIOS it gave the following tips:

1. A SMBIOS/DMI 2.3 or later compliant BIOS is recommended. Check for a BIOS update.
2. BIOS can be shadowed and should be enabled.
3. BIOS is flashable and socketed so it can be upgraded when needed.
4. CPU is upgradeable.
5. An SSE processor is recommended for Modern Multimedia Applications and games.

Basically, I just want to know what it all means so that I can get my computer running its best. What do you suggest I do regarding SANDRA's feedback?

— John Whelan, via the Internet

NEED HELP?

If you have a hardware question or comment, or a personal problem, write to:

Greg Vederman,
Hard Stuff, PC Gamer,
150 North Hill Drive,
Brisbane, CA 94005
or E-mail:
gvederman@pcgamer.com

A Let's start at the top and work our way down. For your PCI and AGP busses, the message "AGP Ver 2.00 or later offers better performance" is rather silly. Yes, AGP 2.0 *could* offer better performance, but only if you buy a new motherboard that supports the feature — your motherboard doesn't. And really, there's not too much of a performance difference either way. Shadowing your BIOS won't make much of a difference, and should probably be left disabled. As for the message about PCI latency, changing this setting probably won't speed anything up either, but you can tweak the setting to your liking in your system BIOS if you want to see for yourself (if your BIOS even has the option). Other

DEARGREG

Q My first problem is my cat. Most of the time she's a good kitty that lays around the house, eats when she's supposed to, and is kind and good-natured. Most times when I feed her, I hide some kitty treats at the bottom of her bowl. But when I

run out of treats or forget to put them in, she starts acting like a brat, and starts peeing all over my house! Do cats really have emotions? My money situation isn't all that terrific right now and I don't know how much longer I can afford to keep her happy with all these treats. What should I do?

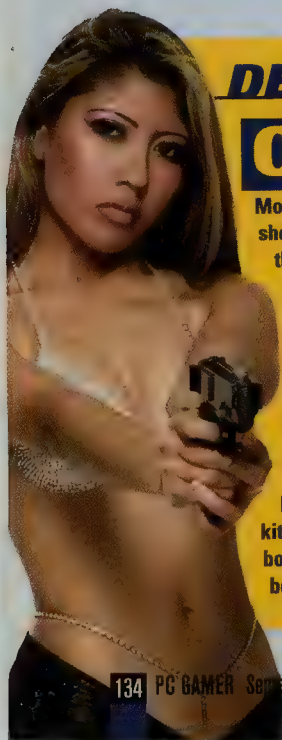
My second problem is with my modem. I used to be a huge fan of multiplayer games. In fact, I failed geometry because I spent too much time playing *Counter-Strike*. But now, all of a sudden, my modem has gone screwy; it often stops sending and receiving information when I'm online. I've noticed the

problem when surfing the web, and especially in *Counter-Strike*. I used to use MSN as my ISP, and when my problem started I switched to MindSpring to see if things would be better there. They weren't, and now I'm on Lycos (free Internet), since if I'm not going to be able to play games over the Internet anyway, I might as well go the free route. What's wrong with my connection? I miss the days of blowing away terrorists!

— Jon, via the Internet

A There is no such thing as a good kitty. Cats are technically inferior to

dogs in every way. In fact, if you cut the head off of a cat, the body will run around just like a decapitated chicken — a sure-fire sign that it's extremely low on the evolutionary scale. (Don't try this at home, kids — Ed.) A dog on the other hand... you cut that thing's head off, and it knows to stay dead. Of course, I'm not speaking from personal experience when I say these things, and the last thing I'd



than that, get the newest BIOS for your motherboard, and that'll about do ya, as far as SANDRA is concerned, anyway.

Q My standard modem just ain't cuttin' it anymore — it's too slow. I think that it's time to go broadband. What do you think is better, cable or DSL?

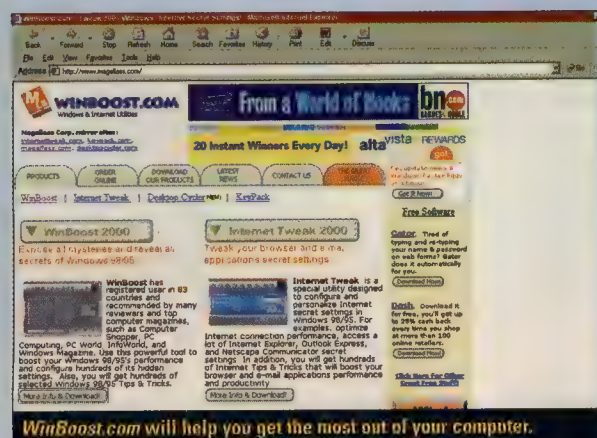
—Martin Stoch, via the Internet

A In most situations, DSL is the better option. It isn't as fast (potentially) as cable, but you don't have to worry about sharing bandwidth, and it tends to be a much more reliable connection — especially for playing games over the Internet.

Q I just wanted to let you know that you had a typo into the Hard Stuff Tech Q&A section of the July 2000 issue.

You said that the website for WinBoost was www.maglass.com, when it is actually www.magellass.com.

—“The Rob,” via the Internet



A Thanks for the letter, Rob. I've received a lot of E-mail from people having difficulties finding the site and thought they were just a bunch of witless boobs with bad typing skills. This witless boob apologizes for the confusion and now realizes that you could just go directly to WinBoost.com.

Q A couple of questions regarding your testing of the Athlon/GeForce combos in the May 2000 issue:

1. You only appear to have used one model of GeForce card. Why didn't you try boards from a variety of manufacturers? By not doing so, you left open the possibility that the motherboards simply didn't work with the one card you used.
2. You used PC133 memory in boards that spec PC100. Why?

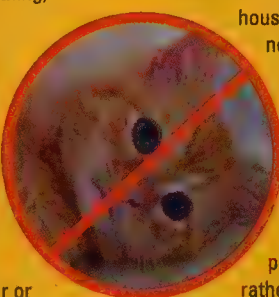
—Steve Britten, via the Internet

A Here's a couple of answers that may clear things up for you:

- 1.) I actually tested on two different GeForce cards. I didn't mention this in the feature because showing all the results with both cards would have taken up too much space on the page.
- 2.) I used PC133 memory because it tends to be of higher quality than a lot of the PC100 memory floating around out there and because it was recommended that I do so by AMD. I also used a single stick of Apacer PC100 SDRAM to ensure that the crashes weren't the fault of bad memory.

want anyone to do is hurt any animals, but trading your cat in for a dog would probably be the best option for you. (We're looking to trade Vederman in for something, too...any and all offers will be considered. —Ed.)

As for your modem problems, the most likely culprit (and I'm sure to get a million-and-one responses telling me differently) is your phone line and/or phone outlet. I've had the exact same problem many times in my life since I tend to move every year or two (Not by choice, mind you — Ed.), and when you've got a modem that was working fine initially, and no hardware or software



has changed, the phone line is almost always to blame. If you haven't just moved, it's possible that the rainy season took its toll and did some damage to the box at your house, or to the line that is connected to your phone jack. Try plugging in somewhere else in the house and see if your connection problems disappear. Also, call your phone company and tell them your woes; they generally guarantee a certain level of modem performance (though this level is rather slow), but if they come out and check your lines and discover that there is a problem (as long as it isn't inside your house), they'll likely fix it for free.

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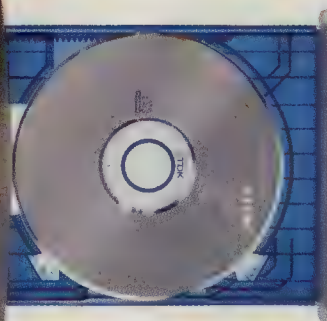
Making choices is what it's all about, and TDK makes your choice in CD recording easy with the world's fastest, purest CD burner and 100% Certified CD-R discs. Funnel music or multimedia sources at ultimate speeds directly to your computer, then burn them fast and pure. How far you take your discs is up to you. Even if where you have to go involves not moving that far at all.

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"It's the perfect real-time strategy game...one of the most important new RTS games in a long time."

- Gamecenter.com
Rating: 8 out of 10

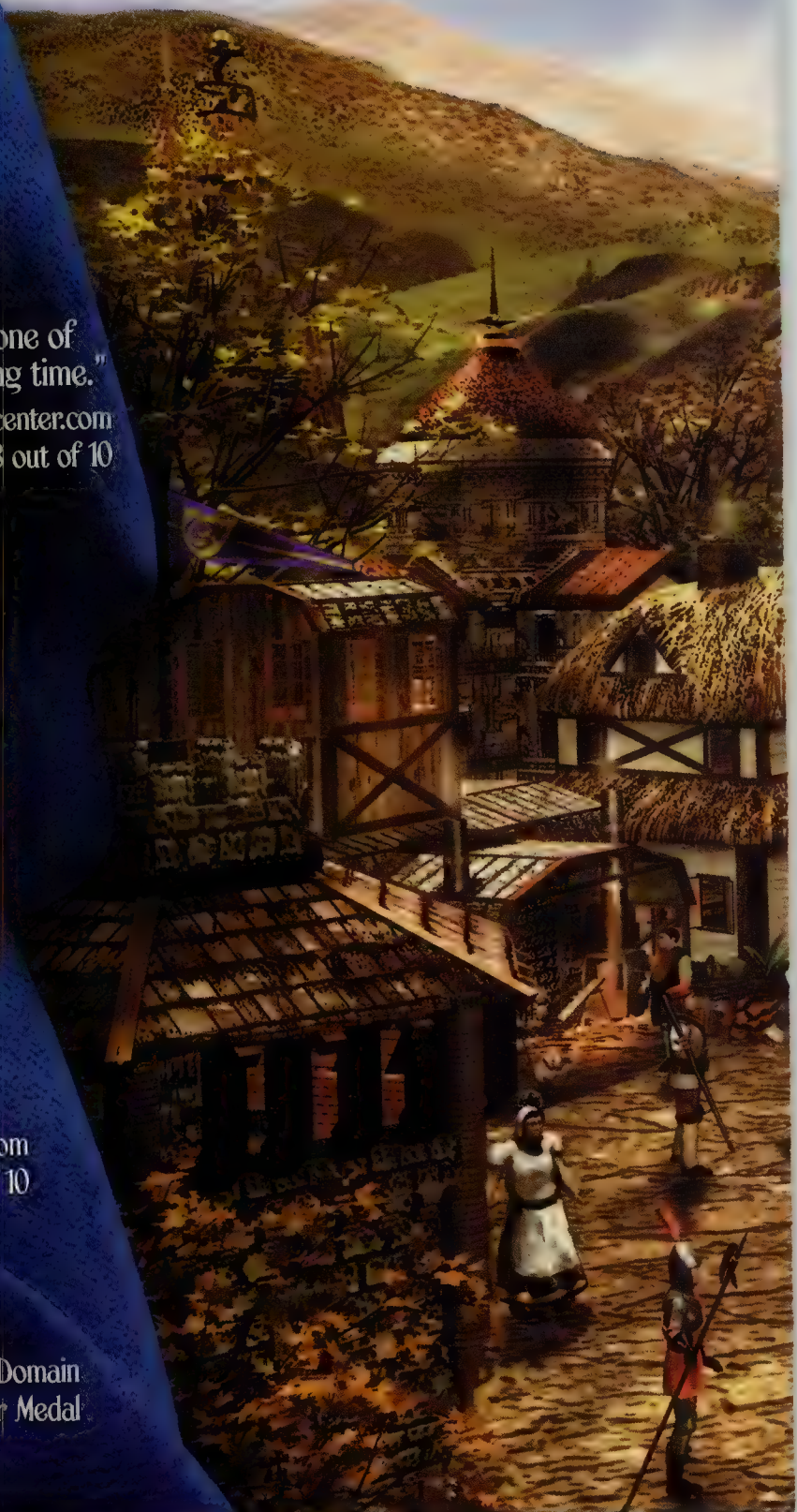


"...it's the perfect title for jaded RTS fans that need a breath of fresh air!"

- PC.IGN.com
Rating: 84 out of 10

"...oozes innovative ideas and gameplay... gamers will appreciate this rare treat"

- Games Domain
Rating: Silver Medal



"...Majesty is a fascinating and fun romp full of originality..."

- CGW

Rating: Four Stars



"If Majesty helps set a trend, then 2000 might go down in history as the year in which gaming changed forever."

- Gamespot.com

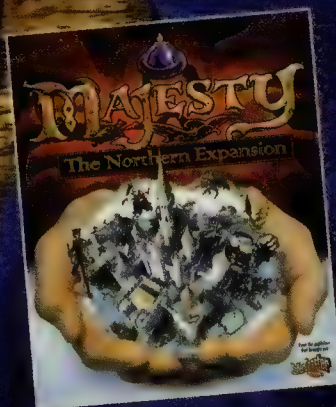
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SimSeconds

Is *SimCity Unlimited* the second coming of the classic series, or just a nicely packaged re-release? You're about to find out!

Two years have been kinder to *SimCity 3000* than they have been to many games, which is to be expected from such a smoothly classical design. Indeed, both prior *SimCity* games retained their appeal long after their releases, not because they were far ahead of any technology curve, but because their elements and style were so perfectly suited to the gameplay.

SimCity 3000 Unlimited is the same game at heart, though with a number of additions, thus giving Maxis the opportunity to relaunch the franchise in the wake of the phenomenal success of *The Sims*. No shame there, particularly when the additions will be heartily welcomed by fans of the original game. A \$10 rebate was being

offered off the \$34.95 list price for owners of *SC3K*, but that expired almost immediately, leaving owners stuck with the full retail cost for an add-on disc's worth of new material.

That new material, however, is pretty darn good. The biggest additions are the building architect and the scenarios, complete with a custom scenario designer. The building architect, which has been available in different incarnations before, is a

mightily impressive piece of work. The level of detail you can pack into buildings is astounding. They show up so small in the game that sometimes you don't realize these are mini-masterpieces of art and architecture. With the editor, these buildings can be modified or built from scratch.

Using myriad block shapes and a three-dimensional palette, you can create a building by laying each element on a grid, like a

The building architect is a mightily impressive piece of work. The level of detail you can pack into buildings is astounding.

LEGO structure. With the Paint, Detail, and Prop menus, you can then add layer upon layer of complexity, filling the structure out by adding architectural features like windows, gingerbread, domes, peaks, statues, and so on. A wide array of paints and wall textures, mixed with odds and ends like parked cars, trees, fruit stands, and swim-

ming pools, finish off each structure. They can then be added to your game or uploaded to the Maxis building exchange site.

SC3K Unlimited includes 13 new scenarios, and many more user-designed scenarios are already on the website (www.simcity.com). These set pieces present specific tasks

that need to be accomplished in a limited amount of time, usually without the ability to pause. In Moscow, you must fix a city overrun by criminals; in England, there are fires to douse; and in Seoul, you need to prepare for the Olympics. In Berlin, the wall has just come down and you must reunite the city, while in other cities you face various natural and financial disasters. These unique challenges focus on specific aspects

PAINT BY NUMBERS



The new architecture tool for *SimCity 3000 Unlimited* enables you to zoom and rotate buildings. Drawing from a palette of objects, textures, and colors, you can then modify new or existing structures like this strange-looking apartment complex.





Asian buildings join the new European structure and the old American ones to create a much more diverse visual style.

of city management, offering a quite different feel than a normal scratch-built city.

The rest of the package adds a host of enhancements both small and large. European and Asian building sets join the American-style structures, adding a much wider range of structural styles, including a couple dozen new landmark buildings. When starting a new game, you can now choose custom options such as the terrain and tree types. This really boils down to different colored terrain tiles that simulate the look of desert, snow, tundra, and so forth. It has no effect on gameplay, and it only marginally affects the look of the game, since city tiles soon cover a large chunk of the terrain anyway. Four new disasters — a plague of locusts, burning space debris, toxic clouds, and a giant whirlpool — almost double the misery you can visit upon your *Sims* citizens.

While a longer-running rebate program or some other upgrade option would have made this an easy call for owners of the original, the \$35 price point makes it a bit steep for people who have already played through *SC3K*. This is more a package for people new to the series, and since the game has aged well, it has no problem sitting alongside the best new strategy offerings.

SIMCITY HEAD TO HEAD

	SimCity 3000	SimCity 3000 Unlimited
Number of buildings	489	839
Landmarks	74	97
Scenarios	None	13
Disasters	5	9
Building architect	No	Yes
Scenario creator	No	Yes
Customizable terrain	No	Yes
Seasonal events	No	Yes

Meanwhile, back at the split-level ranch, Maxis is prepping an add-on pack for *The Sims*. Due in September, the disc will have the expected assortment of new objects, furniture, decorations, and characters. Edit Mode has been greatly expanded, with three times the number of doors, windows, and other objects. A genie lamp, complete with wish-granting genie, is also on the drawing board, along with new careers, alien abductions, a Grim Reaper, a robot, a

chemistry set that produces game-altering potions, and more. The most requested feature is also being added: Yes, sims can now use the new vibrating bed to do what you always wanted sims to do, you sick bastards. Oh, and if you haven't already downloaded the Guinea Pig from www.thesims.com, do so now. Its constant care requirements make it an irritating, miserable little pet, but of course, misery is the key appeal to *The Sims*.

PCG

BUG PATCHES



ON THE CD!

You'll find these patches on the CD! Be sure to read the included readme files for complete info.

■ Half-Life v1.1.0.0 (hl-1100.exe)

This is a massive patch, mostly focusing on improving multiplayer *Team Fortress Classic*. It includes: complete rewrite of *Half-Life's* networking system, new VGUI in-game interface, three new maps, Engineer upgrades sentry gun immediately, Spectator mode added, support for mouse buttons 4 and 5, the class of everyone on team is on scoreboard, console and in-game chat uses a True Type font.

■ Half-Life: Opposing Force v1.1.0.0 (OPFOR-10001100.exe)

This patch includes an entirely new online game mode called *Capture The Flag*. This patch will also update *Half-Life: Opposing Force* to version 1.1.0.0 to be compatible with *Half-Life* version 1.1.0.0.

■ Ground Control v1008 (gc10071008eng.exe)

Improves joystick support, and modifies the way the game software recognizes the *Ground Control* CD, solving the "hourglass" bug.

■ Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun v2.03 (Ts203en.exe)

Various bug fixes.

■ Diablo v1.08 (drt1108.exe)

Adds support for Battle.net gateways, changes default Battle.net font so that it is easier to distin-

guish characters while in chat, displays cancel dialog when server is busy, and multiplayer character files are now located in the Diablo directory.

■ Soldier of Fortune v1.05 (sof105patch.exe)

EAX performance optimizations, update to A3D's A3DAPL.dll to provide detection for Vortex 2 chipsets, and adds pure server option.

■ Tzar v1.05 (tzarpatch-101-to-105-usa.exe)

Fog and exploration now handled properly when game is restarted, various graphical improvements.

■ Carnivores 2 v1.1 (c2_patch_1_1.zip)

Game now starts on all Voodoo-based 3D accelerators, fixed alpha blending problem when using Matrox G400 based cards, debug messages removed, and A3D 2.0 and EAX 2.0 support added.

■ Messiah 0.2 (messiah02.exe)

Fixes graphical corruption when high resolution character setting was selected, adds extended support for Voodoo 5 and GeForce 2 video cards.

■ Descent 3 v1.4 (D3_US_1.4_Patch.exe)

Fixes an effects problem that occurs in low-memory conditions, fixes memory overwrite with long ship logo file names, fixes a UI bug that causes the Terrain Detail slider to show incorrect values.



THE POINT AFTER

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Spread the Word

You say you're a gamer, but you're not into sports games?
Smoke says the only *true* all-around gamer is a sports gamer.

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POS	NAME	ETA
PF	O. HARRINGTON 76,800 / 6 YRS	75
PF	J. HOWARD 300,000 / 4 YRS	81
SF	L. ODOM 60,000 / 4 YRS	76
SG	A. IVERSON 300,000 / 6 YRS	87

POINT LIMIT: 1,000,000
NET TEAM POINTS: 1,238,000
POINTS AVAILABLE: -258,000
TOT. TRADE POINTS: 136,800
ROSTER SPACE: 2

ATLANTA

POS	NAME	ETA
C	E. FOSTER 41,600 / 1 YRS	87
SF	A. CROSHERE 47,600 / 1 YRS	67
SG	Q. LEWIS 40,000 / 4 YRS	83
SF	E. MINOR MINIMUM / 2 YRS	93

POINT LIMIT: 1,000,000
NET TEAM POINTS: 890,100
POINTS AVAILABLE: 109,900
TOT. TRADE POINTS: 147,000
ROSTER SPACE: 2

Being successful at every facet of *NBA Live 2000* requires all of the skills of every gaming genre combined.

Believe it or not, there are actually a lot of PC gamers out there that aren't into sports games. I always find this surprising, because in my mind, sports games have a lot of the same elements that attract people to all of the other genres. Let me give you a few examples:

ACTION Any sports game with arcade play falls into this category. Okay, maybe there's no blood-letting involved, but it takes just as much skill to time a Randy Johnson fastball as it does to aim a sniper rifle at a moving target. Finding the open hole in the line and sprinting into the end zone for the score is every bit as challenging as rocket-jumping up to the quad damage.

STRATEGY Both real-time and turn-based varieties can be found in just about any sports game. Choosing the most advantageous starting lineup in baseball or calling the right play against the opponent's defense in football are similar to some of the same decisions you'll face in any turn-based wargame. Putting that strategy into action is

when the real time skills come into play. In most games, you have teammates on the field, and they may not always do exactly what you had planned on them doing. This is the place where the master *StarCraft* player's skills would come in quite handy.

ROLEPLAYING One of the most enjoyable experiences I've had in sports gaming was when I created myself as a player in *NBA Live 2000*. As my undersized, overweight doppelganger progressed through his 10-year career, I was able to live out my NBA dreams...and let's be honest, this is as close as I was ever going to come to the real thing.

SIMULATION Other than goofy games like *NFL Blitz* and *NBA Jam*, all sports games are simulations; they take a real-world activity and replicate it as closely as possible on the computer. If you like being Da Mayor in *SimCity 3000*, there's no reason you wouldn't enjoy becoming the GM of the Los Angeles Clippers (and it's certainly more challenging to try and turn the Clippers franchise around than running even the most dilapidated city).

ADVENTURE This is probably the hardest genre to compare, but I'll give it a shot. The classic adventure game is all about solving puzzles as you progress through a story. I like to think of a season as the story, and the puzzles equate to what I need to accomplish in order to get the best results. So, instead of the "get the thing, and bring it to the guy, to get the key, that opens the door" type of situations you might face, I look at trades and dealing with injuries as my puzzles that need to be solved. Do I give up my backup defensive lineman to get that receiver I really need? What happens, though, if one of my other linemen gets hurt? What will I do then? Okay, maybe it's not an exact fit, but I think you get the point.

So, the next time someone tells you they're a gamer, but they're not into sports games, explain why sports games should appeal to just about anyone. With a little help from you, we just may be able to expand our merry little band by one more member.

FAREWELL...BUT NOT GOODBYE

Finally, I just wanted to take a minute to let you all know that this is my last issue as a member of the *PC Gamer* staff. Don't panic, though...you'll still get to see my ugly mug and read my ramblings every month right here in this column. I'll also continue to do reviews from time to time, so you may not even know I was gone.

But the rest of the staff will (hey...quit your cheering, you knuckleheads!), and I just wanted to let them know how much I'll miss the daily hijinks that I've been a part (and instigator) of for nearly three years. I've really enjoyed working with all of the great people that have made this magazine the finest you can buy. Special thanks go to Matt Firme and Gary Whitta for giving me a chance to prove myself and for allowing me to start a new career at my advanced age. (Okay, I'm only going on 34, but around this place, I feel like Methuselah!)

Quick Plug: Check out *T3* (which stands for Tomorrow's Technology Today...clever, huh?), a new magazine from Imagine Media spotlighting the latest and greatest in all things technological. The first issue hits newsstands in October, and I hear the writing will be outstanding (okay...you figured it out...this is my new gig).

See you next month...

PCG

Nobody gets
The Sims: Livin' Large Expansion Pack
before we do.

Nobody gets
Homeworld: Cataclysm
before we do.

Nobody gets
Legends of Might And Magic
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The SIMS LVIN' LARGE

Retro Chic Or Roach Infestation... Your Choice



The SIMS LVIN' LARGE

Genre: Simulation # of Players: 1
Release date: November 9, 2000

"The Sims Expansion Pack gives you even more power to create and control the lives of your Sims. You have new career options and entirely fresh gameplay elements, from roach infestations to alien abductions. It's up to you to decide whether your home is a gloomy castle or a love shack, if the breadwinner is a hacker or a slacker. Put your Sims into



all-new wacky and wicked settings and see what happens." — DailyRadar.com



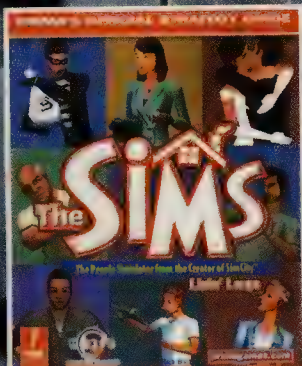
What could be more fun than to watch the Sims you create show their affection towards one another?



Have your Sims build a fire and cozy up on the bear skin rug.



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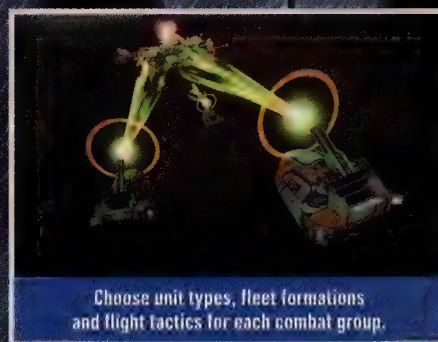
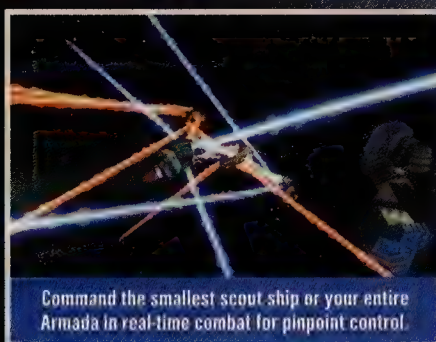
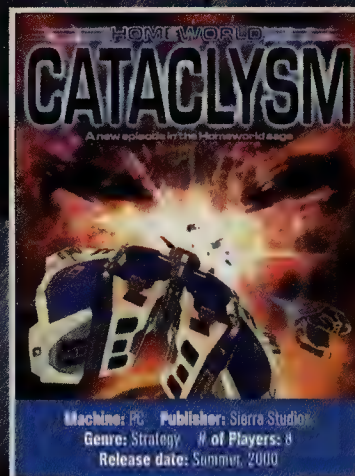
Cataclysm...Ooh, That's Gotta Hurt

"Homeworld: Cataclysm,

the next episode in the Homeworld universe, begins roughly 15 years after the events of the original game. Take command of a new sect with dozens of new ships and technology at your disposal. Lead your fleet through 17 single player missions as you struggle for position in the emerging order – and face the might of a mysterious and powerful new foe." – **DailyRadar.com**



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LEGENDS of Might and Magic

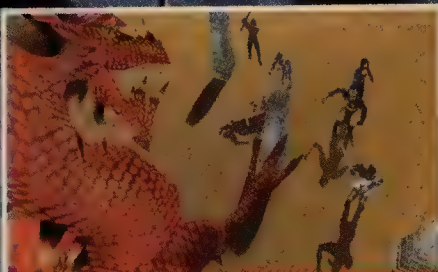
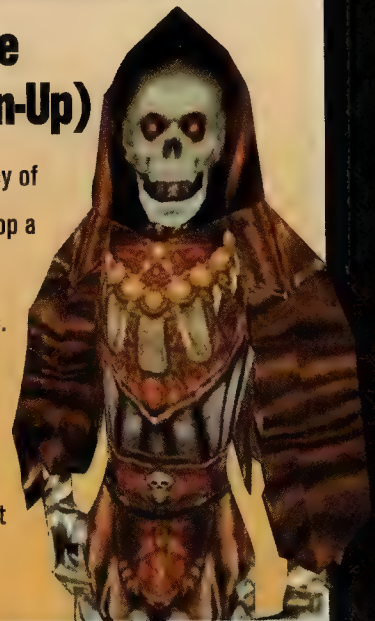
Warrior Embattlements (Without The Messy Clean-Up)



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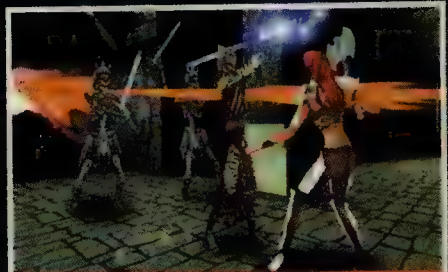
heart, limitless courage and a thirst for adventure will succeed and become true legends in the Might and Magic universe." — DailyRadar.com



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OPINION

Counter-Strike Power

Yeah, we know Valve already gets too much coverage. But when your games are this good...



Counter-Strike reminds me of the days when my high school gang would get together, invade the trainyard, and place C4 on boxcars containing plutonium. Er, wait. No.

I remember well the first time I experienced the original *TeamFortress* for *Quake*, because I didn't sleep for a week straight. After getting tipped off by a buddy who proclaimed it to be the best thing since sliced bread, I developed an uncontrollable addiction that was only alleviated by a particularly nasty hard drive crash. The boys at Valve noticed the game's genius, and hired the Australian team to work on *TeamFortress 2*.

Let's fast-forward a bit. After 12 months of being limited to a sporadic 33.6 dialup, the gods smiled and delivered unto me a new Tokyo apartment with a just-fast-enough ISDN line. And the first thing I did was download *Counter-Strike*, a user-created *Half-Life* modification that has been making tidal waves online.

I jumped onto a local Korean server, and wound up going to bed at 5 a.m. the next day. Yeah, it's that good. Let me give it to you straight: if you have a fast, reliable Internet connection (56K or above), turn on your computer, point your browser to www.counter-strike.net, and start downloading the best fifty-meg file you'll ever leech. If you don't have *Half-Life*, buy it now, or trade in your copy of *Daikatana* for store credit.

Not convinced? Then listen up: *Counter-Strike* is officially billed as a "*Counter-Terrorism Half-Life Modification*," but I look at it as *Rogue Spear* after an overdose of *No-Doz*. Instead of the expected heads-a-poppin' mayhem of your typical Deathmatch, *Counter-Strike* finds the perfect balance between realistic tactical combat and no-holds-barred fun, as a team of terrorists takes on a team of law enforcers through beautifully-designed real-world locales.

Setting itself apart from the comparatively free-form carnage of *TeamFortress Classic*, each *CS* game is broken up into paintball-style rounds. During the first minute of each round, players can purchase items from a large selection of real-life weaponry — you'll find everything from Desert Eagles to Sig Sauers to Kevlar vests, all of which have been modeled impeccably. The specific rules

for victory differ with each map. Some require a team to bomb a certain target, escort a VIP to a safe zone, rescue AI hostages, or just wipe out the other team. The winning group of ass-stompers takes in a significant amount of cash, which can be traded in for more powerful weapons.

Counter-Strike finds the perfect balance between realistic tactical combat and no-holds-barred fun.

Sticking together and working as a team is the key to victory, and the design team has reinforced the importance of cooperation via a *Tribes*-style radio, where you can quickly bark out commands to your teammates. Your group will need to rely on cover for the majority of the game, since the real-world weapons inflict real-world damage — one sniper shot to the head, and you're kicked into observer mode until the next round.

Though the *Half-Life* engine is getting a bit creaky, the fearless team of *CS* mappers has included around two dozen real-world locations that range from aesthetically acceptable to drop-dead gorgeous. Each map includes a variety of attack patterns — a great example of this is the 747 Hijack map, where terrorists must hold down a jumbo jet for five minutes. The counter-terrorist team can barge in the front door via the jetway, enter through the luggage compartment on the bottom of the plane, sneak in through the rear door, or drop from a balcony into the cockpit. High-tension drama ensues.

There are also plenty of sneaky, undocumented tricks to whip out in the midst of a standoff, with my favorite being the "Human Shield" technique. Since both teams lose a fat thousand dollars if they kill a hostage, running out in the open with three or four civilians in tow does a great job of freaking out trigger-happy opponents. Realistic smoke grenades (a new feature in *CS 6.5*) can visually confound as well, engulfing rooms in thick fields of white.

I highly recommend reading the *CS* documentation — the setup isn't nearly as cryptic as the original *TeamFortress*, but there's a solid learning curve here. For your first few sessions, try hanging around team members, backing them up, and watching what they do. If you get lost, you'll be able to locate them via radar at the top of the screen.

Oh, and one more thing: if your connection is any slower than 56K, don't bother. *Counter-Strike* demands a fast connection, and I'd guesstimate that 96 percent of all *CS* players are the low-ping bastards you love to hate. It might be time to upgrade to a cable modem or DSL, and *CS* is reason enough.

The bottom line? Brilliant. With game design that's nothing short of sweet gaming nectar, *Counter-Strike* has quickly evolved into one of the most engrossing experiences you can have online, and deserves all the exposure it can get. Download it now. **PCG**



Storytelling It Like It Is

Wolf encounters early obstacles in *Vampire's* online play... but still wants to stick with it.

The release of *Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption* came with mixed blessings. It finally shipped, but buggy code, frustrating gameplay, and the lack of save features have resulted in a lukewarm reception (see the full review on page 92). However, one aspect of the game stands head and shoulders above any competition, and makes *Vampire* one of the best games to come out this year: the Storyteller multiplayer mode.

By allowing a Storyteller (or Dungeon Master, for the AD&D-minded) to craft his or her own *Vampire* story by populating levels with individuals, we finally have something close to a pencil-and-paper RPG on the PC.

Getting in to a Storyteller game is as simple as signing on WON.net, finding a game, and joining. Four players can join a game in progress, and the interface works exactly like the single-player version of the game.

I joined WON and found a game. The first Storyteller I encountered obviously had no idea what he or she was doing — I waited for a story to begin as other characters joined, cast some extremely high-level disciples (the vampiric equivalent of spells), and then disappeared. It became apparent that nothing was going to happen, so I moved on.

My second attempt was much more rewarding. Finding a game called "Simple Story for Newbie Players," I joined with a couple of other new vampires. Immediately,

an old man approached us with a tale of woe — his friends were in trouble in the church, and could we help? We immediately went to rescue his partners, and discovered that the city (medieval Vienna) was awash with demonic forces.

My party headed to the castle of the evil Tzimisce lord, and we found out that he had indeed created the foul beasts ravishing Vienna. However, he had a good reason — it seemed there was an even greater evil at work. The Elder vampire was simply trying to protect Vienna from the other evil, and...

The game froze.

Caught up in the moment, it took me a while to realize that the game had become unresponsive. With a Control-Alt-Delete, I ended the program, restarted the game, and quickly rejoined. My cohorts had also crashed, and so it took a few moments for us to continue the adventure. Eventually, the Tzimisce once again told us that there was a greater evil involved, and...

The game froze.

Unfortunately, this time I couldn't rejoin the game — some bug prevented my adventure from continuing. Sad, but understand-

ing of the initial bugs in any online game, I found another story. Joining in, I found blood sprayed on walls, corpses littering the ground, and demons prowling about. My party members and I learned from a weary warrior that great beasts had ravaged the city, and we needed to hunt down those responsible. Unfortunately, the huge number of sprites, creatures, and textures simply overloaded my system, and the game quickly became so lag-laden I could hardly play.

That was okay — I'd seen enough to know it was time for me to create my own adventure. Using the Vienna setting, I placed a few monsters, a couple of items, two NPCs for a conversation the players would overhear, and a big baddie in a far-off room (with several smaller baddies along the way). My idea was very straightforward — players would come in, overhear a conversation about a giant monster, and, after they asked

some questions, they'd go off and slay the mighty beastie for the promise of riches and glory.

The three players who eventually joined my game seemed eager to perform some slaying. They immediately headed over to my two NPCs, and while I frantically tried to type the conversation, switching back and forth between the NPCs using the Storyteller controls, one of them started to shout "I need weapons! Give me a frickin' weapon!" I paused the conversation long enough to quickly

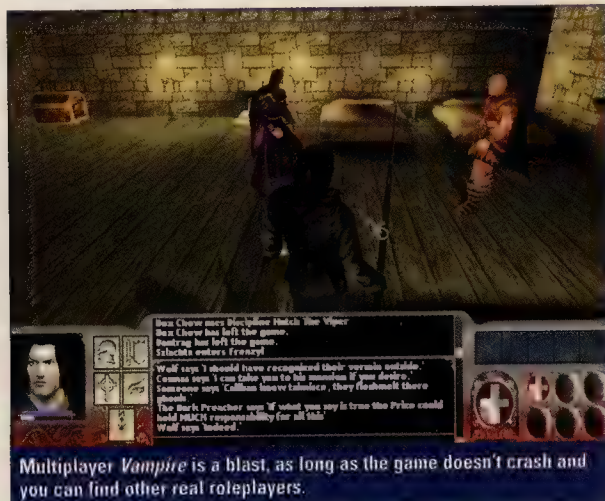
(well, almost quickly) drop some items for the demanding fellow. Then, after posing questions to the NPCs, the characters were off chasing a big, bad monster.

I soon realized that the smaller creatures I'd left for my intrepid explorers weren't nearly strong enough. However, before I could drop any bigger critters in the way, the adventurers met up with my big baddie — and were very quickly killed. Swearing up a storm, the three revived themselves (putting them back at the beginning of the level) and rushed to the creature — which killed them all again. "This sux!" said one, and disappeared before I could give him some experience points to make up for the encounter. "One more time," said another. The two remaining members rushed forward again, ready to do battle...

And the game crashed.

Obviously, the multiplayer version of *Vampire* needs work. However, even with the problems, I did have a lot of fun. The design is fantastic, and once the tools are placed in the hands of creative, patient Storytellers, there's no telling what they might do. Unfortunately, we'll have to wait for a couple of patches before the game is stable enough to support the fun consistently. But trust me — it'll be well worth the wait.

PCG



Multiplayer *Vampire* is a blast, as long as the game doesn't crash and you can find other real roleplayers.

AGE of SAIL II

Naval combat makes
its glorious return



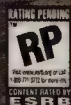
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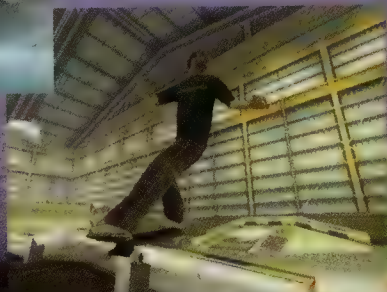
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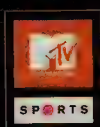
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OPINION

Hitting the Beach

With books, that is. It's time for The Colonel's annual wargamer's reading list, and it's a good one.

As I write this, I keep sneaking glances at two books, both of which beckon me with a siren's song: the latest *Discworld* adventure by Terry Pratchett, and Carl Hiaasen's *Sick Puppy*, his newest chronicle of crime, tomfoolery, and hilarious depravity among the quaint folk of southern Florida. I long desperately to read them, but like Ulysses tied to the mast, I must resist. At least until that golden day in August when I park my butt on the sands of Topsail Island and surrender to that glorious ritual: The Reading of the Beach Books.

Since I spend so much time reading military history during the other 51 weeks of the year, I generally choose to read Other Stuff during my vacation. But most of you, I suspect, will carry the wars with you, whether you head for the coast or the mountains or Disney World. And for you, gentle reader, the ol' Colonel has sifted the gold from the gravel and compiled this list of recommended titles:

No novelist could have created a character more bizarre than General Orde Wingate, the colorful and eccentric warrior who organized and led the legendary Chindits. Journalists John Bierman and Colin Smith do justice to him in their new biography *Fire in the Night* (Random House). Wingate was a maverick, and he may well have been certifiably mad (he frequently conducted staff conferences stark naked, and periodic attacks of manic depression drove him to a suicide attempt in 1941, when he was snubbed for a knighthood after his astounding victories in Ethiopia). Posted to Palestine in 1936, he became a passionate Zionist and organized the first Israeli self-defense force (working closely with a bold young *kibbutznik* named Moshe Dyan). To the British military establishment, Wingate was an insubordinate embarrassment; but Winston Churchill thought him a genius, and fully backed Wingate's two Chindit campaigns behind Japanese lines in Burma (the efficacy of which are still hotly debated by historians of

that theater). Wingate was as tormented and demon-haunted as Lawrence of Arabia, but his military achievements were equally brilliant; this is the first biography of him to appear since 1959. It is one hell of a saga.

On a lighter note, I was vastly entertained by *The Immaculate Invasion* (Penguin Books), Bob Shacochis' absurdist account of the American intervention in Haiti. It was the third example of what the Pentagon now calls OOTW ("Operations Other Than War") — the other two, of course, being the Granada adventure and the killing-a-gnat-with-a-sledgehammer operation in Panama. Imagine the Keystone Kops with M-16s, thrust into a country overrun

with drug smugglers, corrupt fascist thugs, voodoo cults, CIA spooks, leprous beggars, and the sort of freelance entrepreneurs-in-sunglasses who have lifetime subscriptions to *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. This is a book that Hunter S. Thompson might have written if he'd been a war correspondent.

The Korean War broke out the same year I learned to read, and one of my favorite uncles got a Silver Star for knocking out a Chinese bunker with hand grenades...so I've always had, as it were, a warm spot in my heart for that conflict. Forty-eight years ago, a young Marine named Martin Russ published a brilliant account of his tour on the front lines (*The Last Parallel*): lyrical, sardonic, surreal. It's always been on my Short List of great first-person war books. Now Russ has authored the defini-

tive account of the terrible Chosin Reservoir campaign in the winter of 1950 (*Breakout*, Penguin Books), when 400,000 Chinese materialized out of the howling Manchurian wilderness and came very close to annihilating an entire American army. When questioned about the possibility of collapse, one Marine general snarled, "Retreat, hell! We're just attacking in another direction!"



"It is because I am what I am, objectionable though it may seem to my critics, that I win battles."

— General Orde Wingate, quoted in *Fire in the Night*

MY WAR GONE BY

I Wingate's story rings with a certain Kipling-esque romanticism, Anthony Loyd's account of the Bosnian conflict (*My War Gone By, I Miss It So*, Atlantic Monthly Press) is the literary equivalent of a sucking chest wound. Loyd's in-your-face evocation of Balkan insanity has the jagged impact of a fist going through plate glass. His



My War Gone By, I Miss It So
Anthony Loyd

prose has the clarity and economy of Hemingway's best war reportage, but the only other contemporary work that comes to mind as a comparison is Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, with its hallucinatory vision of the Vietnam War as a bad acid trip. Part of *My War*'s feverish power derives from the fact that Tony Loyd is a confessed heroin addict who can escape the drug only by thrusting himself into combat and experiencing a commensurate adrenaline high (most recently, he's been prowling around in Chechnya). This is hardly pleasant reading, but it is electric and unforgettable. Once you've read it, you will never again accept the "conventional wisdom" about the Balkan wars. It is here, in these scorched pages.

Traditionally, vacation reading is the provenance of the Big Novels you never have time to read during the rest of the year. For swaggering, two-fisted adventure, you can hardly do better than Stephen Harrigan's *The Gates of the Alamo* (Knopf). Harrigan's style is sometimes too self-consciously "epic" and he relies too often on convenient coincidence (but then, so do



War and Peace and *Les Miserables*), but he brings vividly to life such over-mythologized characters as Jim Bowie, David Crockett, and William Travis (not to mention the Mexican general Santa Anna, who, like Satan in *Paradise Lost*, steals the show every time he rides into the narrative, twirling his mustachios like Black Bart). And the climactic siege is rendered with enormous gusto. I can't wait for the movie! **PCG**



The Lowdown on NASCAR 4

It's make-or-break time for this franchise, and the crucial decisions are being made now.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and predict that the entire racing sim genre as we know it will be irrevocably changed this

November. The good folks at Sierra Sports and Papyrus will be releasing their highly anticipated *NASCAR Racing 4* toward the latter part of the month, and it's going to be the full meal deal that we've all been waiting for.

Ever since those evil geniuses at Papyrus got the hardcore sim crowd hooked on that impossibly sweet *Grand Prix Legends* physics engine back in 1998, they've been teasing us with the prospect of a similarly powered NASCAR release.

Well, the teasing is over and Papyrus is about to put out. *NASCAR 4* will be much more than just an attractively packaged update to the original 1995 game engine (as was the case with the franchise's previous two incarnations). Advances in computing power have finally allowed Papyrus to unleash a full field of 43 Winston Cup machines onto thirsty hard drives everywhere, with each vehicle slaved to the same

physics engine that helped elevate *GPL* to exalted status with just about every serious simmer on the planet.

Will the physics in *NASCAR 4* be compromised to make the sim more commercially viable for the "masses"?

GPL didn't sell that many copies for Sierra, and this was in part due to the absence of any built-in adjustability to scale back the sim's steep learning curve. This, of course, begs the question whether or not the physics in *NASCAR 4* will ultimately be compromised in some way to make the sim more commercially viable for

the "masses." For an answer to this question, I went straight to Papyrus founder (and chief evil genius) Dave Kaemmer to get out the lowdown on *N4*'s new driving model.

"*NASCAR 4* uses the same physics engine as *GPL*, but with some modifications to the tire model to make it even more realistic," Kaemmer says. "That doesn't mean it will be more difficult. There seems to be a general belief that realism equals difficulty; this just isn't true. *NASCAR 4* is easier to learn than *GPL*, mainly because the power to weight ratio isn't as extreme, and the courses are mostly ovals. However, it's just

as challenging for the expert — attaining the right balance in the chassis to wring out the last mile per hour is more critical on the ovals, and car control skill is definitely required to drive a balanced car on the limit. In addition, with *NASCAR*, the races are complicated by having to manage tire wear and formulate pit stop strategies."

Fair enough, but what about the scalability (or the lack thereof) that contributed to *GPL*'s commercial demise? How will *N4* address this? "There will be an arcade physics mode which allows a beginner to drive very fast and experience the fantasy of driving a Winston Cup car without facing the reality that it requires some skill," Kaemmer says. "In the simulation mode, there will be a number of driving aids that can be toggled individually by the player: anti-lock brakes, traction control, automatic shifting. For the most part, we've found that people don't really need these aids, even with the full sim."

Well I'm pumped. I've always maintained that oval racing's user-friendly high banks would offer a perfect environment to mate Papyrus' advanced physics model with the sticky-tired Fords and Chevys of *NASCAR* racing. The prospect of simming a 3,500-pound stocker that exhibits realistic body roll and honest-to-goodness tire slip angles has got my "seat-of-the-pants" muscles quivering in anticipation. (Note to self — must spend more time on the ButtMaster at the gym.)

N4 also looks ready to blow its predecessors away on the graphics front. As Kaemmer says, "The artists have really been outdoing themselves, plus the new graphics engine has a lot of capabilities that we've been missing in the past (such as) reflections and projected shadows. We are supporting both D3D and OpenGL, since some cards do better with GL." The visuals in *N4* are absolutely gobsmacking.

On another positive note, Kaemmer went on to confirm that the infamous bug found in previous *NASCAR* releases — where a conga line of stationary AI cars would appear whenever the track is partially blocked — has finally been quashed once and for all. The minimum system requirements for the sim will be a P266 with 64MB RAM and a D3D- or OpenGL-compatible graphics accelerator; You owe it to yourself to get your system upgraded. If it lives up to its billing, *NASCAR 4* could very well offer a life-changing experience for racing fans of all stripes. **PCG**



A night race at Richmond. If you mess up in *NASCAR 4*, that Chevy of yours can actually get airborne.

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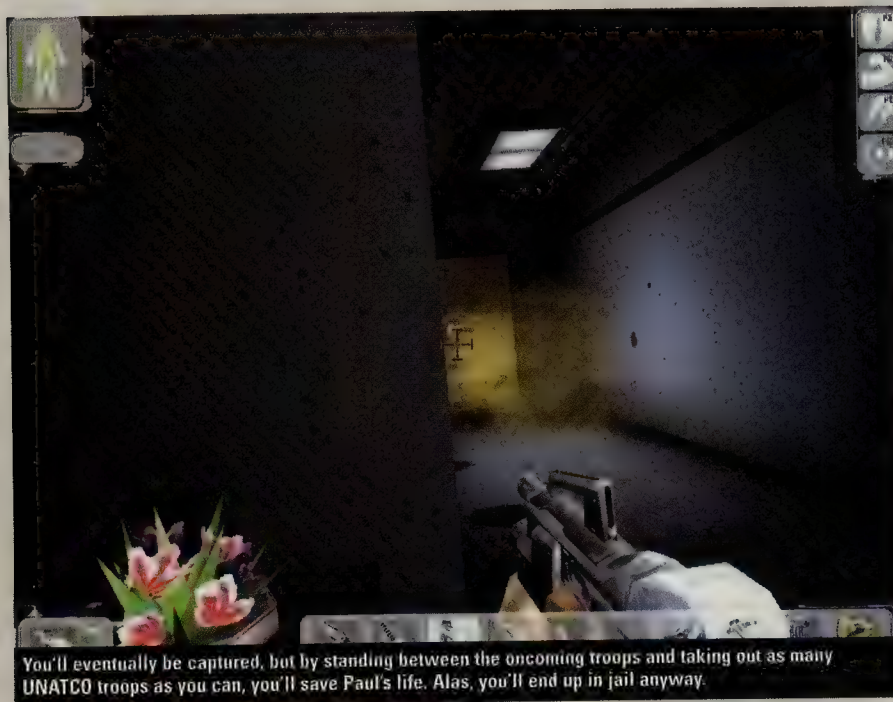
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KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

A War of Heroes

Deus Ex

This is a massive game, especially when you consider there are often several ways to approach any problem. Thankfully there's a good tutorial, and the first couple of actual missions are designed essentially to help you get a grip on all your skills — computer hacking, lock picking, weaponry, navigation, exploration, and so on — so we'll pick up our strategy where things start getting really interesting: when you learn your brother Paul's in deep trouble. One note: this guide assumes you didn't kill Anna on the 747.



You'll eventually be captured, but by standing between the oncoming troops and taking out as many UNATCO troops as you can, you'll save Paul's life. Alas, you'll end up in jail anyway.

HELL'S KITCHEN AND BATTERY PARK

- Contact Paul and go the Ton Hotel lobby and prevent JoJo from hurting anyone.
- Head to NSF headquarters and find the HAZMAT suit on the first floor.
- If you haven't done so yet, use skill points to upgrade your computer skills as much as possible — once you do that you can hack any computer for which you don't have login info.
- Go to the third floor and don the HAZMAT suit, access the security terminal (TJEFFERSON and NEWREVOLUTION), and open the hatch to the basement area.
- Use hacking skills and lock picks to work your way to the room with the data cube, then head to the fifth floor.
- Use the Riot Prod on every guard you meet from the second floor up, align the dishes (MCCOLLINS and REVOLUTION), and open the door to the Comm room

to send the message (NAPOLEON and REVOLUTION).

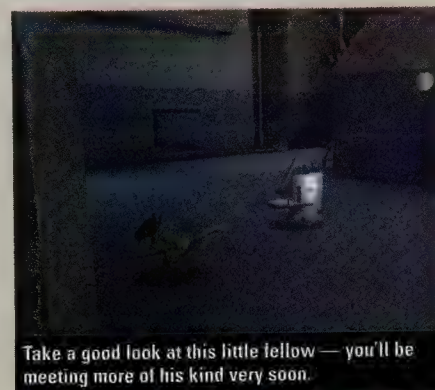
- Toss crates of TNT onto the lower floors to aid your getaway.
- There'll be a shootout at Paul's place; no matter what you do, you'll eventually be captured and wind up in jail, but a good fight saves Paul's life.
- When Daedalus opens the cell, run to the desk to get the baton, smash the crate for a Prod, then get access codes from the data cube on the desk.
- Hide under the desk and disable the guard, then free Miguel (remember the MedBot here).
- Fight your way through the Robot Maintenance room to the Armory; hack the computer terminal upstairs to deactivate the camera and guard bots to collect your stuff. Now work your way to the Medical Area, making a detour into Nanotech to find out more about

Walt Simons and Greasels.

- Find Paul by using the ventilation shaft running from the area overlooking the Karian (dino thingies). The exit is across from the Command Center.
- Be ready to fight like mad at UNATCO, using the MedBot in the Medical Lab to heal all wounds as necessary.
- The kill phrase for Anna is "flatlander woman," found on the computers in Manderley's office and Anna and Gunther's area (DEMIURGE and ARCHON).
- Use the Prod on Manderley to access his computer.

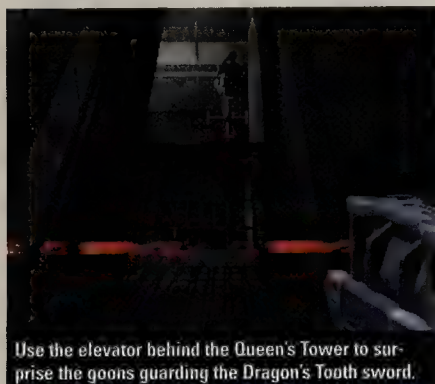
HONG KONG

- Go up the stairs on your left to enter the unlocked office, hack the computer, and disable all cameras.
- Crouch down to open the vent and begin exploring all the shafts; purge the fuel (99871) to poison a slew of guards in their barracks.
- Head upstairs and open the left and right lockers (not the middle one) to get nanokeys, then finally locate a Security Bot (near the vent under the desk) and destroy it with a LAM.
- Enter Flight Deck One and give Jock his chopper; use a GEP or LAM on the second Security Bot.
- Exit to the elevator and go ahead and



Take a good look at this little fellow — you'll be meeting more of his kind very soon.

- enter the Wan Chai Market.
- Find the compound entrance guarded by Gordon Quick.
- Head to Tonnochi Road and find the Queen's Tower Hotel and Maggie Chow. After listening to her, go upstairs and hack her computer (stun the maid) or use MCHOW and INSURGENT to deactivate cameras and open the doors.
- Don't bother going to the police; instead, go downstairs and enter 3444 on the elevator keypad to reach a construction area.
- Give the junkie 20 credits, find the data cube, then return to the lobby and use the computer terminal in a small room to shut down turrets and cameras.
- Return to Harriet and fight your way through the wire door and into the room with the Dragon's Tooth sword (there's an elevator behind the hotel that goes there too); use the computer terminal (Chow's login) and then the keypad (718 or multitools) to open the case.
- Take the sword to Chen at the Lucky Money, then wait for the MJ12 raid to cool down before going to Gordon Quick and finally meeting Tracer Tong.
- Log on to a nearby computer before going to Versalife.
- Don't pay off Hundley — just read a data cube on the floor near one of the 2nd-floor computers to get login info and a temporary security code (6512) for the elevators.
- In the Lab, hang a left and take an elevator up to disable cameras and guns via the computer and get a nanokey to the Augmentation Lab.
- Go to the break room and conference room on the other side of the lobby to find the UC code (525), system login, and password (MCHOW and DAMOCLES), and augmentation canister keypad code (5878).
- You can also climb into the ventilation shaft in the restroom across from the break room to pick up a bonus.
- Now go to the ROM room and find the Augmentation Lab; use the computer



Use the elevator behind the Queen's Tower to surprise the goons guarding the Dragon's Tooth sword.

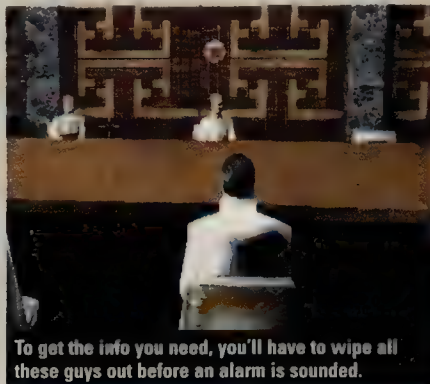


After entering the duct system at the MJ12 Helibase, try and slaughter the troops from this vantage point.

- and keypad to get the canisters, and if you've found the right nanokey you can let the Greasel out to raise some hell.
- Install the canisters with Medbots and head for the ROM room to upload.
- Use the code Tong gave you to enter Versalife's maintenance entrance on Canal Road (get two bottles of wine from Chen and Quick at the Lucky Money first if you like) and jump down the hatch.
- Read the data cube on the floor, climb the ladder, and get ready to face a big bot and two guards in the hallway.
- Use the code from the data cube on the keypad and MJ12 and SECURITY on the computer to disable cameras and open the ramp so you can use a Scramble grenade to make the guard Bots shoot each other.
- Don't worry about the trip lasers you'll find; enter the room on the right at the end of the hall and hack the computer to open the Nanotech containers and Raise Cascade Shutdown Console, then logon as MCHOW and DAMOCLES at the main computer to upload the virus
- schematic and open the UC Chamber.
- Turn around and go left and down a ladder to the UC area and grab the augmentation canisters (if you forgot to open them on the computer, the codes on the keypads are "01," "02," etc.).
- Climb down the ladder on this level and use the MedBot to heal yourself and install those Augmentations, especially the one that protects against biotoxins.
- Here comes Maggie Chow — kill her before she can spew her cliched lines.
- Activate the UC destruction code on the keypad, but be ready for Spiderbots.
- Put on the HAZMAT suit you copped off the Lab lady upstairs and dive into one of the effluent tunnels to reach a watery area; a tunnel with a Karkian in it takes you to the canal — and Tong's proclamation that the Illuminati are involved (oh my!).
- Head to the dock and use the ladder to get to Wan Chai Market.
- Go to the Lucky Money if you haven't yet, then back to Tong's with the good news and see Paul. Time to meet Jock....

BACK TO HELL'S KITCHEN

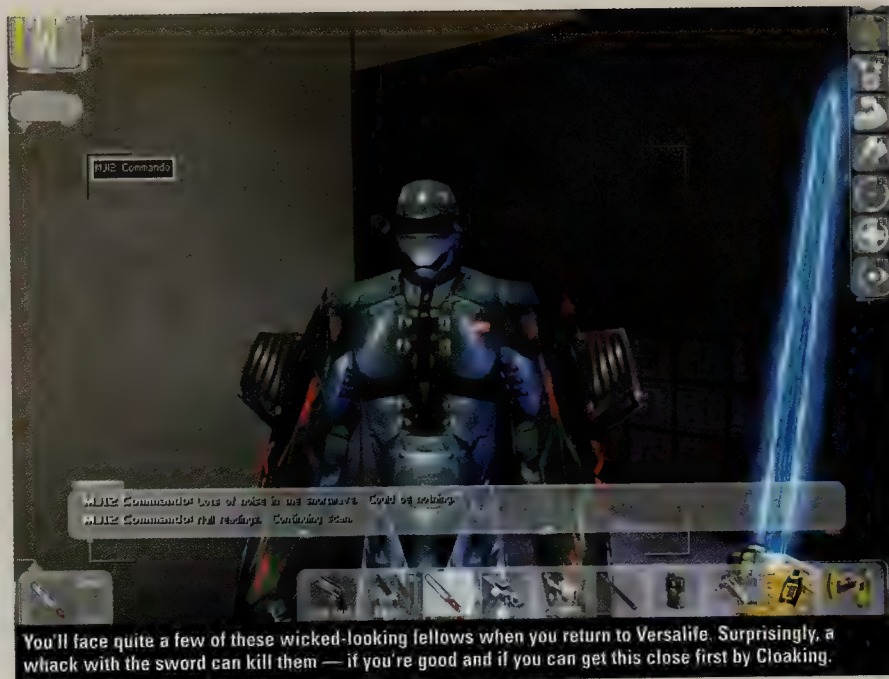
- Fight or dodge the police to the bar (a Cloaking Aug helps) to meet Filben and Vinny the sailor.
- If you have LAMs, use them to kill the Security Bot before it chops Dowd to bits; if not, sneak over to Smuggler's and get some and then destroy it.
- Go to the Free Clinic to use MedBots and kill Greene after exposing him.
- Find Dowd in a corner of the burned-out Osgood storefront (watch out for those troops hiding in the shadows). Don't board the chopper without those LAMs in hand!



To get the info you need, you'll have to wipe all these guys out before an alarm is sounded.

BROOKLYN NAVAL YARD

- Use the grate Jock mentions to gain entry. If you talked to Vinny, you're cool with the Marine guards.
- Open the gate with the nanokey and kill the guard to get a LAM and shotgun.
- Head right to overhear info on the control valve, then get into the Base Commander's building and thoroughly explore all areas.
- Toss a Scramble grenade into the ammunition storage building to get the two Guard Bots shooting each other, then toss a LAM between them to finish them off.
- Return to the building where you overheard the conversation (featuring a blue "Submarine Warfare Division" sign) and enter it.
- Enter the office to the left and disable the cameras and find the data cube in the bathroom.
- Examine the desk to find data cubes and a nanokey for the trailer trucks.
- Use the code 2249 to get into the office with the security terminal (USFEMA and SECURITY) and Disable Perimeter Bots.
- Leave the office and turn left immediately to disable more warehouse cameras (USFEMA and SECURITY again), enter the trucks for goodies, then use Cloaking to roam the warehouse and kill/disable guards with a silent weapon like the Sword or Prod.
- Running low on BioElectric power? Enter the building across from the Base Commander to find a RepairBot — just fill 'er up and make another foray as the Invisible Man with that badass sword into the SWD building and the yard behind it.
- Don't miss the ammo high on boxes above the office where you found the data cube in the bathroom.
- With guards pretty much gone from the perimeter, return to the Ammo Storage building and head for the office — hit the



three buttons to reveal mucho weapons.

- Now return to the SWD building and find the stairs leading to the crane, first picking the lock to the shed with the valve and turning it. Use 0909 to enter the crane building.
- Enter the receptionist's office and read the data cubes to get codes, listening to what he says about the ramp key, then deactivate the cameras with the security computer.
- Use code 6655 (found in a locker near the office) to raise the ramp.
- Kill the guards on the dock and climb the ramp: remember, you need at least five LAMs or heavy rockets to sink the ship, but don't sweat too much — there are plenty of LAMs lying around topside in case you used too many in the naval yard.
- You've got to go below decks, but first you should move up and clear out the lower decks and head toward the bridge.
- Look for data cubes and find the nanokey for Below Decks; from SickBay go through the vent grate and find important data cubes and other treasures.
- Head to the Armory to stock up on ammo and weapons (if you don't have enough multitools, go to the Upper Deck and get the code you need from the Captain's Quarters (keypad 65678).
- Explore the room beside it for more stuff you'll need, then head over

to the Electronics Lab and finally to the Upper Deck.

- Scour the Command Center for data cubes and enter the Captain's Quarters if you haven't already, then enter Ops (83353) before heading belowdeck by using the nanokey on the bulkhead at the bottom of the stairs.
- It's a good idea to clear out as many foes as possible so you can focus on finding the five weak spots for your explosives.
- Start with the east wall of the Helicopter Bay, then go west to the Control Center then North to the Electrical Room spot. Go west until a dead end, then south and turn east to reach the Bilge room.
- Here you must blow the hull and use the computer to reverse the bilge pump flow.
- Head to the Boiler Room and blow the last two sections (you'll have to toss a LAM over a wall to hit the one on the south wall).
- Go back the way you entered and head for the west end of the dock.
- Ride the elevator up and hit the crane boom button, then ride down and take the ladder up to the roof.
- Cross the catwalk (there are more spider-bots beyond the door) and climb up the ladder to the ventilation shaft. If the grate hasn't been blown open yet, do it now.
- Scour the crypt after talking to Dowd to locate all sorts of items; move the stone lids on the coffins to find more stuff and an exit out to the graveyard.
- Toss in a LAM or use an explosive projectile in the Janitor's room to destroy the EM field. Plenty of MJ12 troops arrive, so get to the chopper fast.



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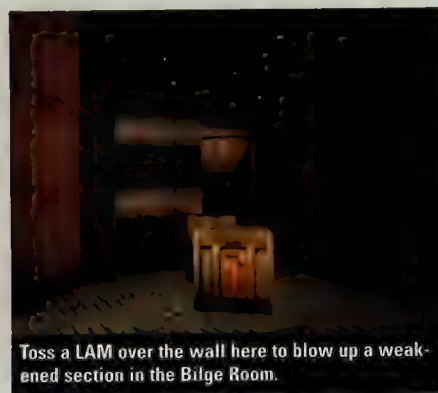
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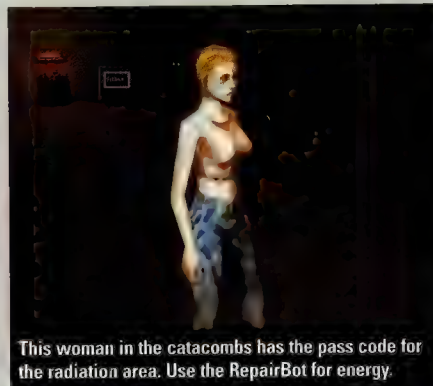
When? Is this a pair of sailors or something from a sideshow? Well, at least you took them out.

PARISIAN CATACOMBS

- Pick the lock on the shed to get the code for the lift.
- At the bottom, go up a flight of stairs to find Aimee to get the password to the large door.
- Grab the HAZMAT suit near the door and put it on before entering.
- Find the RepairBot to recharge, and use some augs for healing and environmental protection.
- Descend the ladder, kill the Greasels, and return to Aimee to learn where rockets are stored.
- Head through the sewers to another ladder to reach the compound leading to the catacombs (grab a couple of lock-picks along the way).
- If you have some credits and need weapons, go to the Metro area to meet Defoe and kill the guards to get cut rates; there's a MedBot down here as well. Otherwise just break the boards in back to enter the catacombs.
- Use the map to navigate and work your way east and south to Bunker 1, moving the conspicuous brick near a barrel of fire to open the entrance.
- Find Chad to learn of the prisoners in Bunker 3, then pick the nearby cabinet to get the Blast Door key.
- Use the key on the door and head downstairs (Tong says it's "another WWII bunker"). Cloak if possible and disable the guards.
- Find the cross near the laser trip wires and disable everything; this is the path the hostages will take.
- Enter and expect much defense here, and when it's clear, head to the guard area to find a nanokey, data cube, and other treats.
- Return to pick the lock on the stone door near the guard area to free the hostages and escort them to Chad.
- Head for the sewers, using the key you found earlier to open the door.
- The streets are crawling with cops and



Toss a LAM over the wall here to blow up a weakened section in the Bilge Room.



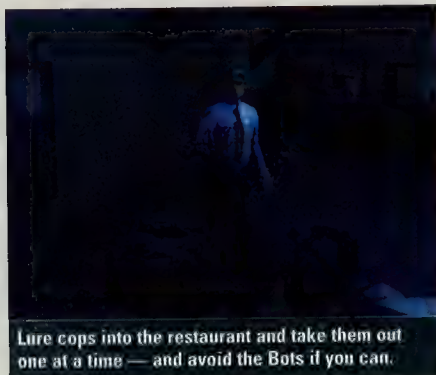
This woman in the catacombs has the pass code for the radiation area. Use the RepairBot for energy.

bots; if possible use the Cloaking Aug and the Thermo-optic suit to move around until they expire, or fight and sneak your way to the restaurant near the Metro entrance.

- Talk to Jaime to get Gunther's killphrase ("Laputan machine") and go to the diner to acquire the security station login; the hostess tells you that Nicolette might be at the La Porte de L'Enfer.
- Go into the kitchen to find a data cube, then find a way across the street. Try this: open the front door and use a sniper rifle to pick off an MJ12 trooper. That will lure a few cops to the door to be terminated. Repeat until the streets are less full of humans, then head for the rear entrance, take down more cops to clear the path to the security terminal, snipe the guards at the security building, and sneak in and disable the bots.
- Find the street sweeper to learn of Renault and go to the hostel (behind the club); you might need the credits from the zyme you steal to get stuff in the club (pick the lock to an upstairs room to get credits and the passcode for more money).
- Steal the zyme and see Renault — then Prod him and his buddy.
- Chase down the bartender and he'll tell you of weapons at Number 11 (the apartment with the green light near the hostel).
- Go to the front entrance of the club. If you're short on credits, break in through the grate under the cig machine, otherwise pay the man and get a key.
- Talk to Camille and get loads of info about folks; pay Cassandra for the code to the vault.
- Go upstairs to meet the "young woman" and arrange a meeting with Nicolette behind the club.

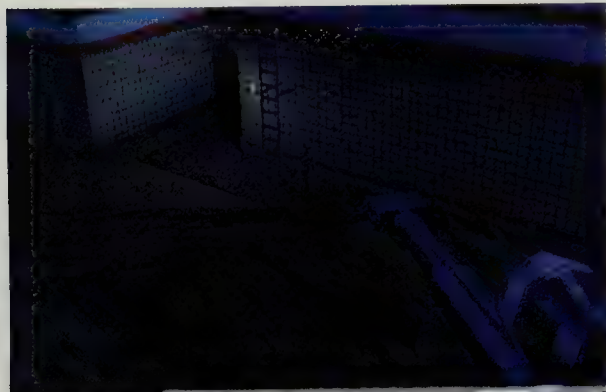
CHATEAU AND CATHEDRAL

- Enter through the back and use the dumbwaiter in the kitchen to enter Beth DuClare's bedroom.
- Move the painting to find a nanokey (take the other one here too) and a data cube; find the nanokey to Nicolette's bedroom behind a vase in the bathroom.
- Go to the cellar and move the candleabra to reveal the passage to the computer room — use a baton or crowbar to smash boards to reach it.
- Grab anything you might need that's here (including the Aug canisters) then use the computer to contact Everett and receive the crypt key from Nicole.
- Be prepared for MJ12 Commandos in the maze leading to the crypt.
- Leave the sewer and climb into the abandoned building to your left, then scale the fallen beam to find the gate key (try sniping the Commando from here).

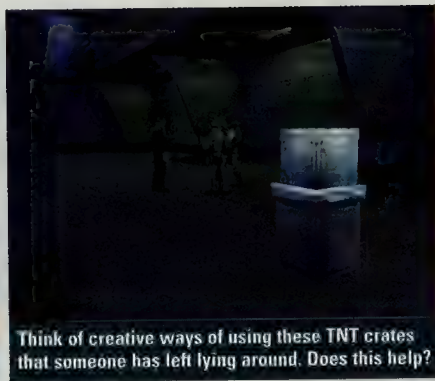


Lure cops into the restaurant and take them out one at a time — and avoid the Bots if you can.

- Open the gate and decide whether to fight it out or sneak in: if you choose the former, a good idea is to disable the alarm sounder by the glass case containing the sniper rifle and security terminal on the left, then shoot the glass and head back to the gate and let foes come to you.
- After crossing the bridge you need to pick your way into the first doorway on the left, but check the right door.
- Return to the door on the left and talk to the cook to find the security terminal.
- Follow his directions to a landing with an open room on the right and stairs on the left: go left to find a room guarded by a Woman in Black — you need the crucial data cube here to hack the security terminal.
- Return to the landing and enter the room with a security keypad and vault; use the data cube codes you just found to get in.
- Go down the stairs to meet Gunther and use the killphrase.
- To talk to Simons, hack the computer here and check the display.
- Return to the landing, go downstairs, and use the data cube code to open a vault.
- Disable the control panel to eliminate the trip wires — the gold Everett wanted is here. If the cameras haven't been disabled watch out for turret fire.
- Leave for the metro and allow yourself to be led to Everett.



From this vantage point, up above you can pick off the guards that are patrolling the rear of the gas station.

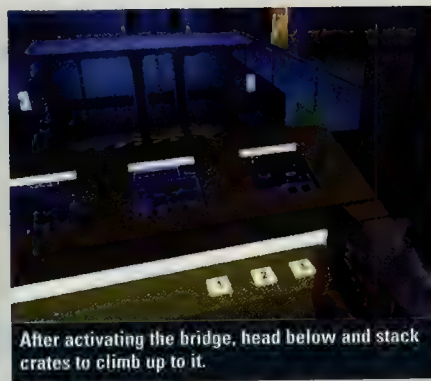


Think of creative ways of using these TNT crates that someone has left lying around. Does this help?

- Run downstairs past the aquariums and talk to Alex, then on to Everett for your next assignment.
- On the way out you can talk to Carmela to learn about Lucious DeBeers — go to the bathroom, slide the mirror, pick the lock, and find DeBeers (read the data cube here for Morpheus info).
- Return to Everett, then back to DeBeers and tell him Everett is on his way.
- Go to the room adjoining Alex's computer system and use the code to see Morpheus, a prototype AI with plenty to say. Leave for the helipad.

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE

- Roam the roof sniping as many guards as you can before entering the building.
- Toss LAMs or, even better, Scramble grenades to destroy the Bots.
- In the stairwell, use an EMP grenade to disable the camera, then dash in and hack the security terminal.
- Take the elevator to the Main Level and take out the guards and the MIB, then ride up to the Control Level and repeat as necessary.
- Go straight out of the elevator and descend the stairs to activate the internal backup power and talk to Stephanie Maxwell for the "backdoor" codes (if she's not here they're COMMAND and ZEBRA42); use them on the Main Level to de-activate cameras and turrets.
- Don't get fancy and try to use the turrets to kill guards because there are other scientists here.
- Advance to the lobby, open the vent grate, and crawl through the shaft to a new room.
- Find another grate and go outside and retrieve a biocell; return to the lobby.
- Enter the hallway beside the desk to find guards outside the Hazard Lab. Put on a HAZMAT suit and enter the lab (disable the electrical power before diving in) to



After activating the bridge, head below and stack crates to climb up to it.

- find another HAZMAT suit, an Aug, and Thermo-optic camo.
- Hopefully you dealt with most of the guards and at least a Bot or two before now. Your best bet is to return to the roof and attack from above because you can avoid return fire quite easily, but it's still gonna be rough.
- When it's over, go to the Comm building and find a scientist, then down the hatch into the tunnels.
- The login info is TUNNEL01 and OMEGA2A.
- After passing through the first contaminated room, kill the spiderbots and jump down to reach a control room and activate the bridge, then stack boxes until you can climb to the bridge.
- Do it again to get to the next level and find the Control Room nanokey.
- Talk to Carter and Savage, then get past the electrical arcs in the back hallway and disable the electrical panel.
- Take the lift upstairs and disable the other electrical panel before logging onto Milnet. Enjoy Bob Page's rant before leaving for the gas station where Tiffany is being held.
- Talk to the bums to get a nanokey and info, then locate the nearby sleeping bum for another nanokey.
- Use the sewer entrance and climb the ladder, disable the patrolling guard, then sneak behind the gas station and onto the rocks.
- Start sniping guards and dogs, but don't kill the Commandos in front of the building where she's being held; instead, go to the front near the pumps and pick them off from there.
- Alternatively, try sneaking onto the roof of the gas station, jumping to the garage, and down the ladder into the room where Tiffany is.
- There's a MIB and guard just outside, and if you didn't take down the Commandos, you've got even more trouble waiting for you.
- From here it's on the submarine — and shortly thereafter the climax to the game. Good luck!

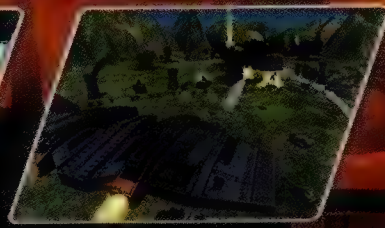
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I face my darkest chapter,
The Queen has taught you well.
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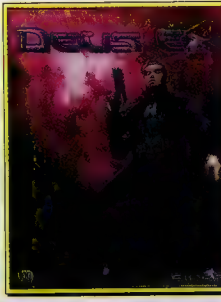
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'DEUS EX' In this thrilling roleplaying adventure, you play the part of a powerful, nano-technologically augmented anti-terrorist agent. It's up to you to stop the conspirators from achieving their goals. Travel the globe in a quest for knowledge, develop your characters strengths, build a network of allies to assist you, and determine when stealth and strategy are more important than action.

IonStorm (Roleplaying)
Release: 7/00
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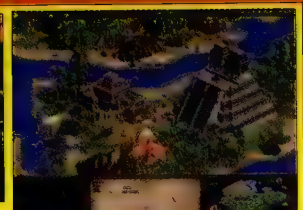
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Microsoft (Strategy)
Release: 11/00
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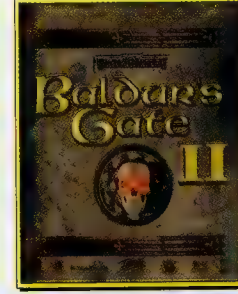
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'BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOW OF AMN' The newest title in the Baldur's Gate series adds new classes, spells, and items and uses an isometric, top-down view. The game is real-time but is pauseable, and actions may be assigned to characters in your party at that time.

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Interplay (Roleplaying)
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Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption

This is an epic RPG in the best sense of the word. A heart-wrenching storyline of lost love and stolen innocence creates the framework for an adventure that spans a thousand years and two continents. While it would take a book to map out every single nook and cranny of the various dungeons — much less track the complex plot lines — these next few pages covering the second half of the game should give you enough to, er, sink your teeth into.

THE BASICS

- When your characters are low on blood, they are more susceptible to frenzy, and while your frenzied characters will supposedly attack at random, they're more likely to hit the members of their party than the enemies.
- Move slowly. Rushing ahead without thinking will quickly get you mobbed and the bad guys in *Vampire* don't line up to wait their turn. The term "dungeon crawl" should be used literally while exploring.
- Bring your lunch. There are dungeons where opponents either have no blood to be drained or are just too dangerous to pin down. Make sure to carry plenty of vitae.
- Scout ahead. Your party's artificial intelligence is just about nil; leave them behind occasionally and go on without them when you suspect a mob is coming.
- Double back. Since you can't save anywhere except in your haven, remember where the auto-saves happen in a dungeon (it's usually between levels) and go back through the door to get a quick save before heading into a big encounter with a baddie.



SOCIETY OF LEOPOLD Knock over Father Leopold's blood supply and he'll start crying like a little baby.

LONDON

THE TEMPLE OF SET >>> LEVEL 1

- When you reach East London, immediately head to the brothel and meet Lily. Offer her some protection, and she'll join your group.
- Leave the brother and go visit Otto's Van and the bridge haven. Now you've got a place to sleep and all the weapons you can afford.
- Head back to the brothel and ignore the big obvious door. There's nothing down there but whores and customers. Instead, head to the hallway that slopes downward and follow it until it becomes a room filled with art pieces. Look carefully under the shelves with the pots and there is a switch. Press it, and one of the paintings will move out of the way, revealing the temple entrance.
- Immediately go down the left passage and flip the switch; it opens the middle door.

- At the next split, go left again and flip the switch, then come back and go right down to Temple Level 2.

THE TEMPLE OF SET >>> LEVEL 2

- At the very beginning of the level are firetraps. Have one person go and flip

the switch either to the right or left. That will open the door on the opposite side (left opens right, right opens left). Both doors lead to the same place so you only need to do this once.

- When you reach the door made of bars, head left; there's a switch that opens it.



THE BROTHEL The switch to reveal the Setite Temple entrance is on the floor next to the pots.



SETITE TEMPLE The Setites are easily beheaded. Bring along a nice melee weapon like the chainsaw.



SETITE TEMPLE LEVEL 4 The unassuming man to the left has Lucretia's heart. Kill him and take it.

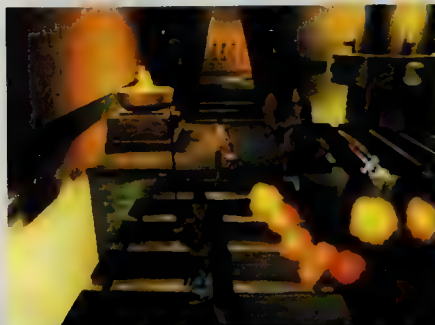
- Go across the grate and step on to the yellow triangle. This will open a door to your right.
- The door to the right contains a Tome of Obfuscate and another switch. This one opens a door back in front of the statue of Set.
- After going through the newly opened door, there is a short series of rooms. The doors to these rooms will slam shut for a period of time, so make sure the party isn't separated. Eventually the rooms lead to Temple Level 3.

THE TEMPLE OF SET >>> LEVEL 3

- Watch out for a hoard of Setites in the alcoves to either side of the doors as you enter.
- Go straight and flip *one* of the switches. They open the doors on either side of the first room and opening them both will get you mobbed. Both doors eventually lead to the same place.
- A straight hallway opens up to a wide area with three staircases. The right and left are just item boxes, and the straight one goes to Temple Level 4 and...

LUCRETIA

The Setite queen is pretty easy this time; just keep laying on the firepower. When she disappears, head back to Temple Level 3, use Walk the Abyss to get home, then head for the Tower of London.



SETITE TEMPLE LEVEL 2 Firetraps are hell on parties. Send one person forward to flip the switches.



CLUB TENEBRAE This is one of the few places in the modern world you can snack uninterrupted.

TOWER OF LONDON

- Watch for giant spiders. Use the "Z" key to enter first-person mode and scope out the ceilings when entering a room.
- Don't get near the egg sacks that line the rooms; there's really nothing you want in there.
- After the first level of the Tower there are wraiths. Tread slowly and use aggravated damage to take them out one at a time.
- Once you've gotten Lucretia's Heart, Walk the Abyss and return to the Brothel for the final showdown with the Setite Queen.

LUCRETIA, PART II

The second time you fight Lucretia, she's a real pain in the neck. Her snake form is hard to hit and she keeps charming people. Use Cloak the Gathering to keep her from getting to people and ignore her serpents. When a man appears with her heart, take him out instead of her. Then you'll be given

a choice — destroying her heart is more noble, and eating it grants the forbidden Setite magic at the cost of your humanity.

THE HECK WITH BIG AND PARLIAMENT

Here's what there is to see when touring London at night:

WEST LONDON

- Curio Shop — A magic shop with some rare vitae.

HAVENS

Upon entering a new area, immediately find and save at the local haven. Besides being the only place you can save your game, havens also let you allocate your experience toward various skills and serve as a place to store your items. Also, if you have yet to discover the nearby haven, then Walk the Abyss will not work. Here's where the four havens are:

PRAGUE

This one's easy because it gets pointed out for you. The Prague haven is right under the university that the Brujah call home.

VENICE

Just as you enter from Prague, look for a door on the right; it's called Abandoned Church. Flip the lever on the wall and the floor will slide away, revealing the haven below.

LONDON

Take the underground to East London, then immediately hang a left. Past Otto's Van is a bridge house that also doubles as a haven.

NEW YORK

By the docks is Dev Null's apartment. He's more than willing to let you crash there — or at least he doesn't seem to get any crazier if you do.



TOWER OF LONDON Ghoul Spiders will poison you if they get close. Make sure to check the ceilings.

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The last dungeon in the first half of the game, Vysehrad Castle is also the beginning of the more complicated encounters and terrifying bosses you'll run across. Although the path through Vysehrad Castle is fairly straightforward, there are a couple of things you'll want to be especially careful around. Take note of the following tips regarding these baddies:

THE TZIMISCE

These flesh shapers will attempt to use various disciplines that tend to cause party members to frenzy. Approach them with caution and use either Majesty or Awe to keep them docile.

VOZHD

The first really tough boss, Vozhd is a hulking behemoth that is capable of taking out party members with one big bite. If he picks up someone, they're dead, but you've got a couple of seconds to wait on him while he's eating. Approach him with caution and use aggravated damage weapons and fire. Try to back your characters out of his range whenever possible to keep him from grabbing and snacking on them.

VUKODLAK

Don't stress about the big guy...he'll be back to deal with you later.

- Club Tenebrae — A goth club is a great place to meet vampires. This is where you pick up Pink.

EAST LONDON

- Otto's Van — Apparently he just likes living in a van because Otto has enough guns and ammo to take out every bank in Europe. Drop by and stock up.
- Bridge Haven (next to Otto's Van) — Always good to have somewhere to shut the eyes and get some rest.
- Brothel — A friendly neighborhood brothel is the cover for a Setite temple; tread carefully. This is where you'll pick up Lily.

NEW YORK

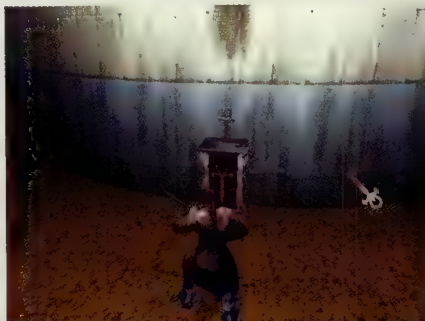
Stuck in New York for a couple of nights? Here are some things to keep you busy:

DOCKS AREA

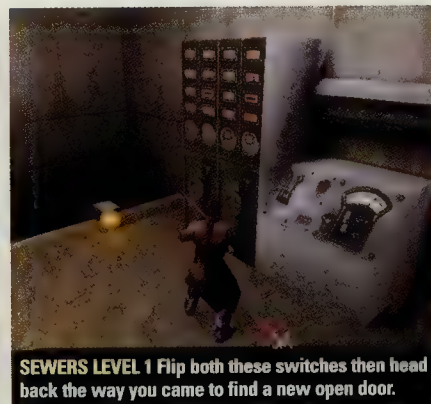
- Dev Null's Apartment (and haven) — This crazy Malkavian is a virtual trea-

sure trove of information and will let you sleep in his pine box.

- The Gun Haven (Weapons Shop) — The best weapons in the game are here but they come at a high price.
- Taxi to uptown — What kind of loser takes the subway?
- The Giovanni Warehouse — These mobsters need some lessons, see?



SEWERS LEVEL 2 Don't leave the level without grabbing the Tome of Protean that's on this podium.



SEWERS LEVEL 1 Flip both these switches then head back the way you came to find a new open door.

- Sewer Entrance — Exactly as glamorous as it sounds.

UPTOWN

- New Moon (magic shop) — A nice shop with plenty of vitae and a new age kind of atmosphere.
- Barclay South — This posh building is where Count Orsi has been holing up. There's also a storage room around back.
- Cathedral of Flesh — Vukodlak's taken up sculpting...using living creatures!
- Orsi's Factory — Orsi still needs to be taught a little lesson. Here's where he is hiding.
- Sewer Exit — When arriving in uptown New York society, always make sure you're seen crawling out of a sewer; it adds a bit of mystery, not to mention musk, to the party.

THE SEWERS >>> LEVEL 1

- Follow the path until there is green water you can't cross. Go to the large machine across from the water and use the valves to open a door back by the beginning of the level.

THE SEWERS >>> LEVEL 2

- Watch out for a firetrap over the grates at the very beginning.
- Before you turn right toward the column with electricity flowing through it, continue straight for a moment; there's a Tome of Protean there.



SEWERS LEVEL 3 Run past these alligators to the nearby exit unless you want to press your luck.

OTHER USEFUL TIPS



Feeding your party is an essential part of the game. This fella makes a nice snack.

>>> DON'T BOGART THE BODY

The best combination of disciplines for remaining well fed is a high Feed combined with Awe. After stunning a target with Awe and drinking your fill, immediately tab over to one of your other party members. There will be a slight pause as the target regains its bearings, and the next person in line can easily grab the victim and continue feeding.

>>> THE PATCH

As of press time, Nihilistic Software was promising a patch that should be available by the time you read this. This huge patch will affect the following:

- Save anywhere
- Pause combat (allows pausing of the game in single player to issue commands)
- Greatly improved network play, supporting lower bandwidth connections
- Support for storyteller mode modification of generation, humanity, and lowering of attributes
- Various AI fixes/tweaks (includes boss difficulty, coteria blood usage, and guard alertness)

>>> THE ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINES

- Food — The better the rating, the less blood is needed to fill up a character's blood pool.
- Walk the Abyss — Opens up a gate between the party and their haven. Since this is the only way to save the game, getting Walk the Abyss early makes everything else easier.
- The Spirit's Touch — The only way to identify items. To use it, simply select it and then right click on items in your inventory.
- Awaken — Lets you bring back party members who have been knocked into torpor. This skill is absolutely necessary later in the game.
- Awe — Draws mortals close to the casting character and keeps enemies from attacking them. A couple of Awe points can make the first few dungeons a breeze.

- In the electricity room, go to the right and use the control valves. Switch off valve #1 but leave #2 alone.
- When you come to the train tracks turn right, then right again at the first passage and down to level 3.

THE SEWERS >>> LEVEL 3

- At the first T-junction, take a left, then scoot through the small opening on the right. Continue straight, ignoring any holes in the walls, and follow the pipe. Eventually you'll come to a raft that will take you across a small, nasty body of water. Save before you go on — there are albino alligators on the other side! The alligators are tough so it may be wiser just to run past them and get to the boss.

THE UNDERPRINCE

- This vile fiend is the self-styled prince of the sewers. He's got an army of rats and he's a master of obfuscate. Try to stay on him and ignore the rats. Anyone who has Heightened Senses will have a much easier time with the battle.

THE GIOVANNI WAREHOUSE >>> LEVEL 1

- In the second room is a pack of Giovanni with big guns. Walk in carefully and attempt to pull them out one at a time.
- The switch upstairs opens the main warehouse door.
- The switch to open the first door inside the big warehouse room is all the way on the other side. It looks like an intercom.
- In the room after you meet the FBI agent again is a nasty Giovanni with a rocket launcher. Be cautious and have some cover scouted out.

THE GIOVANNI WAREHOUSE >>> LEVEL 2

- Shortly after entering there is a guarded room with a huge bloodstain outside.



CATHEDRAL OF FLESH LEVEL 1 Even the mild Szlachta are sporting weapons and advanced powers. Try to go slow and avoid being mobbed.

Inside are two Giovanni with heavy weapons, a ton of cash, and some exploding barrels. There's a high chance of disaster but there's a switch you need to throw to move on. Try to draw the Giovanni and their pet wraith out of the room and fight them away from the barrels.

- When you enter the room with the conveyor belt and multiple doors, go into the smaller room on the left. Inside are a switch and a tome of Mortis.
- Past the double doors there are about a dozen Giovanni and wraiths, all armed to the teeth. Move slowly and try to draw one or two at a time.

THE CATHEDRAL OF FLESH >>> LEVEL 1

- This is a wide open loop. To open the door to level 2 you must kill the Vozhd.

THE CATHEDRAL OF FLESH >>> LEVEL 2

- Again, a straightforward fight. All of the creatures are familiar but are stronger than you've seen them; even the littlest critters are a threat here. There's also another Vozhd.

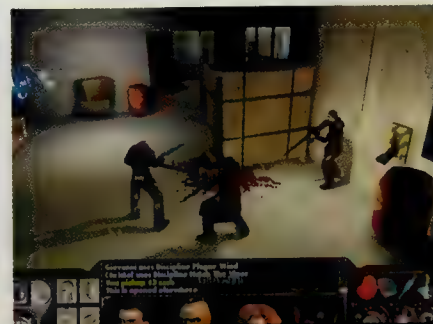
VUKODLAK

- Here it is...the endgame. There's no easy or safe way to beat Vukodlak. He's big, ornery and mean. Good luck.

PCG



GIOVANNI WAREHOUSE LEVEL 1 This switch opens the main warehouse doors. Flip it quick.



GIOVANNI WAREHOUSE LEVEL 2 Avoid big weapons and try to go in with all melee fighters.

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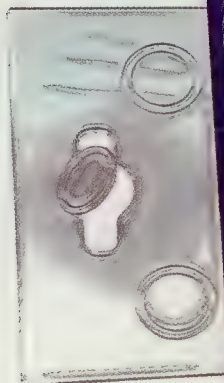
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2000



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"...It's got sass, class and a lot of lead character

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— GameSpy



* This is a dramatization. Do not attempt to plug box into game console. Silly doll box not available in stores.

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A detailed illustration of Konoko from the video game Oni. She is a young woman with short, spiky purple hair and intense green eyes. She is wearing a grey tactical vest over a black shirt. She is holding a large, black, futuristic handgun with both hands, aiming it towards the viewer. The background is dark and textured.

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Konoko from Oni
by Bungie

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Words Good... Pictures Bad

For the past several years, I have thoroughly enjoyed your magazine. I believe that it provides the best reviews and the wittiest commentary. PC Gamer writers consistently have kept me in stitches while giving focused, insightful, and accurate reviews.

You can imagine my distress, therefore, when I opened the June issue to find that PC Gamer reviews are now little more than pictorials; the narrative is almost nonexistent. Pictures are wonderful — they play a role in selling games (and other products). But, quite simply, I read your magazine and buy games based upon your written reviews, not because three-quarters of a page is pictures.

Please cut back on the screenshots in your reviews and bring back the insightful and intelligent narratives. Let writing and reading lead the way again!

— Rick G., via the Internet

While it's true that there is an increase in the number of screenshots we've been including in the magazine, it's not coming at the expense of the written information. One of the main reasons for some of the style changes is to allow us more room to breathe and get more information on each page (in the form of both pictures and text). Take another look, Rick — even count the words, and you'll find that, for the most part, the word count of our reviews is pretty close to what it's always been. (Out of respect for Rick, no picture will accompany this letter.)

A Milieu Mix-Up

I just read your Game Guide 2000 in the June issue and except for one part, it is up to the excellence I've come to associate with PC Gamer. In your preview of WarCraft III, it was written: "Everyone knows this battlefield. It's Erathia." It is, in fact, not Erathia. Erathia is the land where the Might & Magic and Heroes of Might & Magic games take place. The realm of

WarCraft is Azeroth. I just couldn't let this mistake go un-noticed.

— Dan Smith, via the Internet

Thanks to Dan and a number of other PC Gamer readers for kindly pointing out this egregious error on our part. All editors responsible have been punished by not being allowed access to fast food lunches for several weeks.

Why the Internet will Never Replace Print Magazines



I am a loyal reader of your magazine and find it very educational. I just found out who has been sneaking my magazines to the toilet — see the picture I've sent. He's only three and still toilet training, but he sure knows which one is the best PC games magazine around.

P.S. R.I.P. PC Accelerator (You will be missed...by me and my two sons).

— Moe, via the Internet

High Expectations Can Lead to Huge Disappointments

Have you noticed over the years the inverse review/preview ratio? I just yanked some back issues off the shelf and compared some preview articles with the actual reviews and rating, and it seems that more than half the time, the more excited you are during the preview, the lower the rating you give the game in the actual review. Some examples are *Invictus*, *Urban Chaos*, and *Interstate '82*. Do you think this is because most games turn out to be a let down, or is because the anticipation is greater than the actual realization?

— Brian Matthews, via the Internet

We look forward to games, and we've looked on the bright side of some that have turned out to be disappointing. Unfortunately, much of the time the design



How could we confuse WarCraft's world of Azeroth with Might & Magic's world of Erathia (inset)? Could it be that all the saturated fat from KFC in our systems has dulled our brains?

documents are too lofty, and in order for the game to ship on time, many of the cool ideas have to be dropped. Not every company has the luxury of a Blizzard or an id of releasing a game "When it's done."

Sick of "The Vede"

I think I've found all the room Greg Vederman needs for his Hard Stuff pages. While most of the editors of your magazine show up in pictures once, maybe twice an issue, last issue he had five different pictures of himself.

Additionally, I think it's a shame that some of your software reviews which give out higher than 80 percent get half a page, while Frisbees like *Force Commander* get anywhere from two to four pages.

— JT, via the Internet

"The Vede" Responds: Well, JT, to be honest...



Oops! Sorry, but we need to cut some text in order to squeeze another picture of me into the letters section. But hey, thanks for taking the time to count!

As for your question, we give each review space based on how much interest we feel the readers will have in the game. When we assign the reviews, we don't know what the final score is going to be. Regardless, we think it's just as useful to devote several pages about why we didn't like a highly anticipated game.

PCG



>> Readers Respond to Our Classic Games CD

We thought we had come up with something pretty special for our July 2000 issue, and the overwhelming number of positive responses has confirmed it. Of course, there were a few knuckleheads that complained about the lack of new demos on the CD...oh well, you can't please everyone.

If you continue to put out classic game CDs like this, I will be forced never to let my subscription to *PC Gamer* lapse.

— Kjell E. Godo

What a wonderful idea to make available those old but still excellent games to those who are relatively new to PC gaming (such as myself). I missed out on most of those games when they were new, but despite the dated graphics and sound, these are great games.

— Ice Heart

Ah, now *this* was a really good disc — 12 vintage games (of which I already owned five, but that's alright) to show off the advances from then to now. And what choices, too — wow.

— Death Mage

Wow, what a waste! I thought *PC Gamer* would be showing us the new stuff out there. Guess there are no new games out. This really hits rock bottom if this is all you could come up with. Thanks for the bunch of old games.

— Allen Bowie

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, and thank you! July's disc was the greatest yet. I remember waiting in line for half an hour to get some of these games. They were some of the greatest games I ever played. I worship your genius in placing such classics on the disc. Thank you!

— Ben Bruchmiller

If there were any lingering doubts in my mind that *PC Gamer* was the best gaming magazine in the world, they were all wiped out when I received my subscriber's copy of the July 2000 issue yesterday.

— John Shipley

I missed my chance at playing all of those classics — especially *Wing Commander* and *X-COM* — which almost single-handedly revolutionized the genres of PC games I play today. Thanks for making up for all those missed opportunities!

— Mark Hurd

I hate you all and your evil disc of classic games. I suck at *X-COM* but I can't stop playing it. Space sims irritate me, but *Wing Commander* has taken

over my days. Genres I've never given second chances to are destroying the meager shreds of my social life. So may you rot in hell, you despicable drug dealers of the gaming industry. Your addictive CD is right up there with tobacco and heroin!

— Anfinson

I just loved the July 2000 CD. I am only 11 years old so I got to try the games my Dad used to play. There is a rule with my Mom that says that if my Grandma sends me socks, candy, money, or any of the various things Grandmas are known for, I have to write a "Thank You" note before I can use it. Well, that gave me an idea. I decided that I should write you guys a "Thank You" letter for the great CD.

— Jeremy Briseno

By the way, this month's mag rocks hardcore! I couldn't believe my eyes! *The Secret of Monkey Island*! *X-COM*! *Ultima Underworld*! *Alone in the Dark*! I nearly shat my pants when I saw that.

— Chris

I just wanted to say a big thank you for the classic games CD included in your latest issue. It really takes me back to those amazing years when I first got hooked on computer games, and in this profit-driven age, it was a wonderful surprise to see your magazine make that extra effort to please its readers.

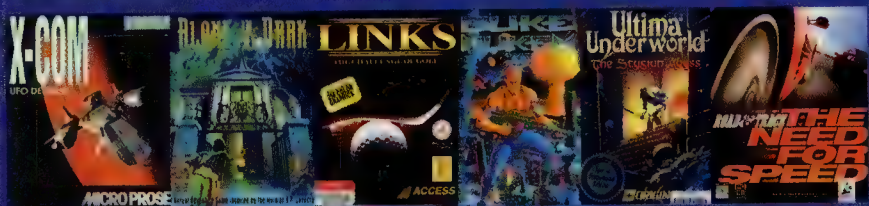
— Mark Wilson

I was hoping I was wrong, but sure enough the entire CD was filled with "has been" games and demos. These games were not even big hits back then (*Oh so moronically wrong* — Ed.). The graphics these games display are horrendous and you even have to tweak your MS-DOS configuration so that the games will run. I look forward to the future of gaming and what new technology has to offer. Normally you provide that, but this month's issue was different. I hope that future issues focus on future games and technology.

— James Matthews

I thought it was funny that you put *Daikatana* on the CD with all of the old games. Is that so it wouldn't look so bad? Since it's graphics engine is about as old as some of those games, it fits right in.

— Joel McDonald



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3dfx Interactive	Voodoo 5	118-119	373	Hasbro	Majesty	138-139	280
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Activision	Dark Reign 2	154-155	20	Havas Interactive	Diablo II	32-33	96
Activision	Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	30-31	934	Havas Interactive	Arcanum	74-75	102
Activision	Vampire	102	134	Havas Interactive	SWAT 3 Elite Edition	78-79	815
Activision	Wizards & Warriors	116-117	82	Havas Interactive	Throne of Darkness	4-5	937
AlienWare PC Systems	Gaming Systems	124	205	Havas Interactive	Tribes 2	1FC	946
American Inst. for Computer Science	Recruitment	181	915	Havas Interactive	Zeus	76-77	315
Anivision, Inc.	netracelive.com	172	953	Interact Accessories	Interact PC Line	80	353
Art Institutes International (EMC)	Recruitment	181	31	Interplay Productions	Baldur's Gate 2	88-89	345
ATI Technologies, Inc.	Radeon	126	13	Interplay Productions	Giants	6-7	322
Babbages Etc.	www.gamestop.com	143-146	137	Interplay Productions	Icewind Dale	22	270
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Electronics Boutique	EB World	43	188	The 3DO Company	Legends of Might and Magic	44-45	113
firstlook.com	Consumer Gaming	23	955	THQ	MTV Sports Skateboarding	150	330
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Gathering of Developers	Kingdom Under Fire	156-157	—	Wizards of the Coast	Dungeons & Dragons Third Edition	87	948
Gathering of Developers	KISS	130-131	276	Yamaha	Speakers	120	152
GT Interactive	Beach Head 2000	84	—				

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(415) 468-4684, x2802
kwells@imaginemedias.com

Hunter Merritt — Ad Coordinator
(415) 468-4684, x2788
hmerritt@imaginemedias.com

Andy Swanson — Ad Director
(415) 468-4684, x2749
aswanson@imaginemedias.com

**Amy Arnold — Senior Reg. Sales
Mgr.**
(212) 768-2966, x4090
aarnold@imaginemedias.com

Mike Grellman — Reg. Sales Mgr.
(415) 468-4684, x2407
mgrellman@imaginemedias.com

**Michelle Cerlenko — Reg. Sales
Mgr.**
(415) 468-4684, x2156
mcerlenko@imaginemedias.com

Wilson Lau — Account Manager
(415) 468-4684, x2737
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Part Number	Chip Set	L2 Cache (KB)	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	72-pin SIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/AMD-K6-2/500	w/AMD-K6-2/550	w/Intel® Pentium® MMX™ 233MHz
Asus P5A-B	MB5711	ALI Aladdin V	512	384	3	Award			3	2	1	Baby AT	1 Yr.	\$95	\$154	\$180	\$155
EPoX EP-MVP3C2	MB5406	VIA Apollo MVP3	512	384	3	Award		UltraDMA/66	4	2	1	Baby AT	2 Yrs.	\$81	\$140	\$166	\$141
EPoX EP-MVP3G5	MB5405	VIA Apollo MVP3	2048	384	3	Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	2 Yrs.	\$106	\$165	\$191	\$166
FIC VA-503+	MB5211	VIA Apollo MVP3	1024	512	2	4	Award		3	3	1	Baby AT	1 Yr.	\$76	\$135	\$161	\$136
Pine VA7-AV	MB5300	VIA Apollo MVP3	512	768	3	Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	5	2		ATX	3 Yrs.	\$89	\$148	\$174	\$149
Shuttle HOT-591P	MB5611	VIA Apollo MVP3	512	256	2	2	Award		3	3	1	Baby AT	1 Yr.	\$77	\$136	\$162	\$137
Tyan S1590S Trinity 100AT	MB5006	VIA Apollo MVP3	1024	384	3	2	Award		4	4	1	Mini AT	3 Yrs.	\$95	\$154	\$180	\$155
Tyan S1598 Trinity ATX	MB5008	VIA Apollo MVP3	2048	384	3	Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$121	\$180	\$206	\$181

Slot A

Slot A	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Bus Frequency	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/AMD Athlon™ 700MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 750MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 800MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 850MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 900MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 950MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 1000MHz
ABIT KA7	MB7501	VIA Apollo KX133	2048	4	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$162	\$357	\$387	\$452	\$542	\$672	\$832	\$1122
Asus K7V	MB7703	VIA Apollo KX133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$182	\$377	\$407	\$472	\$562	\$692	\$852	\$1142
EPoX EP-70XA	MB7850	VIA Apollo KX133	768	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	2 Yrs.	\$126	\$321	\$351	\$416	\$506	\$636	\$796	\$1086
FIC SD11	MB7401	AMD-751 / VIA 686A	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$109	\$304	\$334	\$399	\$489	\$619	\$779	\$1069
Microstar K7 Pro	MB7302	AMD-750	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$137	\$332	\$362	\$427	\$517	\$647	\$807	\$1097
Shuttle A161	MB7501	AMD-750	768	3	Award	100	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	MicroATX	1 Yr.	\$108	\$303	\$333	\$398	\$488	\$618	\$778	\$1068
Tyan S2380 Trinity K7	MB7000	VIA Apollo KX133	768	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$136	\$331	\$361	\$426	\$516	\$646	\$806	\$1096

Socket A

Socket A																						
Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Bus Frequency	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/AMD Duron™ 600MHz	w/AMD Duron 650MHz	w/AMD Duron 700MHz	w/AMD Athlon™ 700MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 800MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 850MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 900MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 950MHz with Enhanced Cache	w/AMD Athlon 1000MHz with Enhanced Cache	
EPoX EP-8KTA	MB7851	VIA Apollo KT133	768	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	2 Yr.	\$139	\$239	\$264	\$314	\$334	\$429	\$519	\$649	\$809	\$1099
FIC AZ11	MB7402	VIA Apollo KT133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$132	\$232	\$257	\$307	\$327	\$422	\$512	\$642	\$802	\$1092
Microstar K7T Pro	MB7203	VIA Apollo KT133	1536	3	Award	200/133	UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$139	\$239	\$264	\$314	\$334	\$429	\$519	\$649	\$809	\$1099

Socket 370

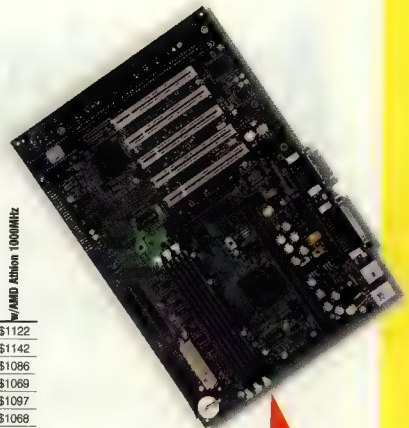
Part Number		Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Video	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	MMIO or CMIO Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty												
													Motherboard Only	w/Intel® Celeron™ processor 500A MHz 128K OD 66MHz FSB		w/Intel® Celeron™ 566 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel® Celeron™ 600 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel® Celeron™ 633 128K OD 66MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 667 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 733 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 750 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 760 256K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 800 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 866 256K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 933 256K OD 133MHz FSB
ABIT SE6		MB6512	Intel 815E	768	3	Award	Intel 815E	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$178	\$260	\$268	\$313	\$343	\$408	\$453	\$493	\$533	\$718	\$788	\$1008	
ABIT VH6		MB6511	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award	AC-97	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$109	\$191	\$219	\$244	\$274	\$339	\$384	\$424	\$464	\$649	\$719	\$939	
ASUS CUBX		MB6726	Intel 440BX	1024	4	Award	AC-97	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$147	\$229	\$257	\$282	\$312	N/A	N/A	\$462	\$502	\$687	N/A	N/A	
ASUS CUV4X		MB6725	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1536	3	Award	AC-97	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$125	\$207	\$235	\$260	\$290	\$355	\$400	\$440	\$480	\$665	\$735	\$955	
EPoX EP-3VCA		MB6854	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award	AC-97	4	1	1	ATX	2 Yrs	\$105	\$187	\$215	\$240	\$270	\$335	\$380	\$420	\$460	\$645	\$715	\$935	
FIC FA11		MB6412	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4	Award		5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$103	\$185	\$213	\$238	\$268	\$333	\$378	\$418	\$458	\$643	\$713	\$933	
Shuttle AV14		MB6311	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award		5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$97	\$179	\$207	\$232	\$262	\$327	\$372	\$412	\$452	\$637	\$707	\$927	
Shuttle ME64		MB6310	Intel 810E	512	2	Award	Intel 810E	3	1	1	Micro ATX	1 Yr.	\$114	\$196	\$224	\$249	\$279	\$344	\$389	\$429	\$469	\$654	\$724	\$944	
SuperMicro 370SEA		MB6140	Intel 810E	512	2	AMI	Intel 810E	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$138	\$220	\$248	\$273	\$303	\$368	\$413	\$453	\$493	\$678	\$748	\$968	
SuperMicro 370DLE (Dual)		MB6154	ServerSet LE	2048	2	AMI		6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$333	\$415	\$443	\$468	\$498	\$563	\$608	\$648	\$688	\$873	\$943	\$1163	
SuperMicro 370DL3 (Dual)		MB6155	ServerSet LE	2048	2	AMI		6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$529	\$611	\$639	\$664	\$694	\$759	\$804	\$844	\$884	\$1069	\$1139	\$1359	
Tyan S1854 Trinity 400		MB6018	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3	Award		6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$106	\$188	\$216	\$241	\$271	\$336	\$381	\$421	\$461	\$646	\$716	\$936	

Slot 1

Slot 1	Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	188-pin RIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Controller	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel® Pentium® III 550 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 650/687 258K OD 100/133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 700 258K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 733 258K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 750 258K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 800/827 258K OD 100/133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 850 258K OD 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Pentium® III 933 258K OD 133MHz FSB	w/Intel® Intel® Pentium® III 550 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel® Intel® Pentium® III 750 258K OD 100MHz FSB	
ABIT BE6-II	MB6508	Intel 440BX	768	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$138	\$333	\$368	\$408	N/A	\$453	\$493	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ABIT VA6	MB6509	VIA Apollo Pro 133	768	3		Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$84	\$279	\$314	\$354	\$359	\$399	\$439	\$624	\$914	N/A	N/A	N/A
ABIT VT6X4	MB6510	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$105	\$300	\$335	\$375	\$380	\$420	\$460	\$645	\$935	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asus P2B-DS (Dual)	MB6707	Intel 440BX	1024	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	4	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$494	\$689	\$724	\$764	N/A	\$809	\$849	N/A	N/A	\$884	\$1124	
Asus P3B-F	MB6720	Intel 440BX	1024	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$138	\$333	\$368	\$408	N/A	\$453	\$493	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asus P3V4X	MB6723	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$121	\$316	\$351	\$391	\$396	\$436	\$476	\$661	\$951	N/A	N/A	N/A
EPoX EP-6VBA2	MB6855	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award	AC-97	UltraDMA/66	4	2	1	ATX	2 Yrs.	\$108	\$303	\$338	\$378	\$383	\$423	\$463	\$648	\$938	N/A	N/A	N/A
FIC KA11	MB6411	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	1024	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$97	\$292	\$327	\$367	\$372	\$412	\$452	\$637	\$927	N/A	N/A	N/A
Intel L440GX+ (Dual)	MB6917	Intel 440GX	2048	4		Intel/Phoenix		Adaptec 2-Ch U2W	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs	\$549	\$744	\$779	\$819	N/A	\$864	\$904	N/A	N/A	\$939	\$1179	
Intel SE440X-2 "Seattle"	MB6921	Intel 440BX	768	3		Intel/Phoenix		Adaptec 2-Ch U2W	6	2	1	ATX	3 Yrs	\$117	\$312	\$347	\$387	N/A	\$432	\$472	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shuttle AV64	MB6309	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$93	\$288	\$323	\$363	\$368	\$408	\$448	\$633	\$923	N/A	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro PIIDM3 (Dual)	MB6153	Intel 840	4096	4		AMI	AC-97	Adaptec Ultra3/160	6	1	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$599	\$794	\$829	\$869	\$874	\$914	\$954	\$1139	\$1429	\$989	\$1229	
SuperMicro P6DGU (Dual)	MB6122	Intel 440GX	2048	4		AMI		Adaptec U2W	5	2	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$474	\$669	\$704	\$744	N/A	\$789	\$829	N/A	N/A	\$864	\$1104	
SuperMicro P6SBA	MB6120	Intel 440BX	768	3		AMI		UltraDMA/66	4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$99	\$294	\$329	\$369	N/A	\$414	\$454	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SuperMicro P6SBU	MB6128	Intel 440BX	1024	4		AMI		Adaptec U2W	4	3	1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$335	\$530	\$565	\$605	N/A	\$650	\$690	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tyan S1834 Tiger 133 (Dual)	MB6020	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	2048	4		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$169	\$364	\$399	\$439	\$444	\$484	\$524	\$709	\$999	\$559	\$799	
Tyan S1854 Trinity 400	MB6018	VIA Apollo Pro 133A	768	3		Award		UltraDMA/66	6	1	1	ATX	3 Yrs.	\$106	\$301	\$336	\$376	\$381	\$421	\$461	\$646	\$936	N/A	N/A	N/A

Slot 2

Slot 2		Part Number	Chip Set	Maximum Memory (MB)	168-pin DIMM Sockets	Flash BIOS	Integrated Audio	Integrated Video	Integrated Controller	Integrated Networking	PCI Slots	ISA Slots	AGP Slot	Format	Manufacturer's Warranty	Motherboard Only	w/Intel® Pentium III® 550MHz 512K 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 550MHz 1M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 550MHz 2M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 550MHz 2M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 1M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 2M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 1M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 2M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 1M 100MHz FSB	w/Intel Xeon 700MHz 2M 100MHz FSB
SuperMicro S2DM3		MB6156	Intel 840	4096	4	AMI	AC-97		Adaptec Ultra3/160m	Intel PRO/100+	6		1	ATX	1 Yr.	\$676	\$1776	\$3006	\$5062	\$7072	\$4932	\$7132	\$4132	\$5082	\$5102	\$5102
SuperMicro S2QR6		MB6190	Reliance HE	16384	16	AMI			AIC-7899 2-Ch Ultra160	Intel 82559	8			SWTX	1 Yr.	\$2732	\$3832	\$5062	\$7072	\$4932	\$7132	\$4132	\$5082	\$5102	\$5102	\$5102



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It's simple. If, at any point of your career the company "id Software" appears on the resume, you're set for life. Such is the case for former id level designer, now lead designer of EA's *Quake III*-based weirdo action-adventure game, *Alice*. And when the title is "*American McGee's Alice*" we should know more about this guy.

American McGee

How the devil are you?

Life is amazing. Better than I ever could have dreamed.

What was the first computer game you ever played?

PacMan.

How did you get into the games industry?

There's almost no substitute for being in the right place at the right time. Interest counts; and effort's critical. Luck, too. But John Carmack and I met because we lived in the same apartment complex in Dallas.

What's the worst game you've ever been involved in making?

Dominion. I did the sound effects for it. I suppose since it only sold about 20 copies no one ever needed to know this...

What's the best game you've played recently?

Crazy Taxi (on the Dreamcast).

And the worst?

No comment.

"American" as a first name. Explain.

My mother actually told me she was deciding between "American" and "Obnard." I'm pretty happy she went with American. As for where it came from, I believe she knew a woman in college who had named her daughter "America"



There is only one other 'American' in the States, and that person was named after me.

and she thought "American" would make a good boy's name. As far as I know there is only one other "American" in the States, and that person was named after me.

What's the greatest moment in the history of gaming?

For me it was acquiring the evil black car in *Ridge Racer* for the PlayStation. That was sweet. Now, in the overall history of gaming in the universe, it seems quite a small moment, I know. But...well, perhaps you had to be there.

Have you ever been arrested?

Yes. When I was 13, I tried to steal a modem for my C64 from Target. My mother didn't have to give me over to the police, but she thought it would teach me a lesson. I'm not entirely convinced that it did—but I haven't been busted since.

How many times have you read "Alice in Wonderland" and how many times would you consider to be unhealthy?

I've probably read it about ten times now. I would consider any amount that makes you start talking like the Mad Hatter unhealthy.

Violence in gaming: legitimate concern or media hysteria?

Don't make me hurt you.

What's your best John Carmack story?

Hmmm...probably the time that Romero's doorknob broke and Carmack decided that he would "fix" the door by chopping it down with a medieval axe.

Did playing Doom ever make you want to kill anybody?

No. But I think that if playing violent video games for hours on end actually did make people more violent in real life, then myself and everyone else in the games industry would be seriously messed up by now. (twitch)

What do you have in your pockets right now?

My wallet (which has a monkey on it), a lighter, lint.

What's your most unpleasant characteristic?

I have no legs.

Online gaming: over-rated fad or inexorable future?

Future.

What game do you really wish somebody would make?

Monkey Racing.

PCG

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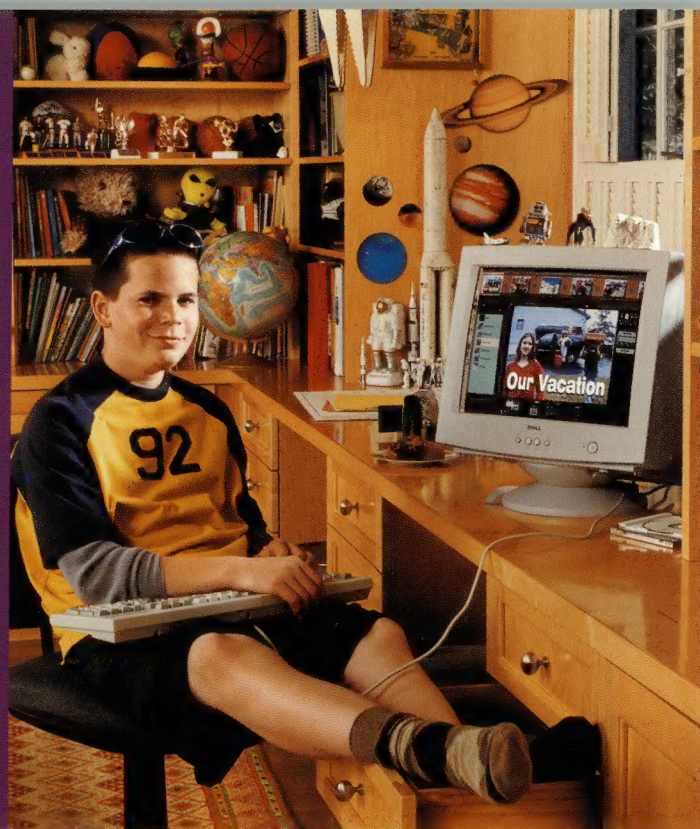
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It was just then that Lisa noticed the strange, pungent odor that was slowly filling the room. It reminded her of the times she spent back in North Carolina working at the slaughterhouse to earn money for her journalism degree. As she looked around to try and discern the origin of the stench, she jerked her hand back in terror. Hammy's ear was falling off of his head, much the way a stream of wax slowly oozes down a burning candle. His little hamster teeth were now black and rotted, and his once bright eyes were now blood-red. Lisa swore she saw him smile as he...**(CONTINUED...)**

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Mt. Rushmore
edited down
to 4 thrilling
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DELL™ INSPIRON™ 5000

Performance and Mobility

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 650MHz
Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology²⁴
- 14.1" XGA TFT Display
- 32MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 6.0GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Modular 24X Max CD-ROM
- 2X AGP 4MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-P 3D⁶ Video
- 52WHr Lithium Ion Battery
- Internal V.90 56K Capable⁵ FaxModem
- MS® Works Suite 2000 ■ MS® Windows® 98, SE
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty²
- 3-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service⁴

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DELL™ INSPIRON™ 7500

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Featuring Intel® SpeedStep™ Technology²⁴
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- 96MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 12GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Removable Combo 24X Max CD-ROM with Floppy Drive
- 2X AGP 8MB ATI RAGE Mobility™-P 3D⁶ Video
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- Internal V.90 56K Capable⁵ FaxModem
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- 3-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service⁴

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DELL™ DESKTOPS:

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- 64MB SDRAM
- 7.5GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- 15" (13.8" vis) E550 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM Drive
- SoundBlaster 64V PCI LC Sound Card
- PC Speakers
- V.90 56K Capable⁶ PCI DataFax Modem for Windows⁹
- MS® Works Suite 2000 ■ MS® Windows® 98, SE
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty² ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

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DELL™ DIMENSION™ L Series

Affordable Desktop Solution

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 667MHz
- 64MB SDRAM
- 7.5GB⁵ Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- 15" (13.8" vis) E550 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM Drive
- SoundBlaster 64V PCI LC Sound Card
- PC Speakers
- V.90 56K Capable⁶ PCI DataFax Modem for Windows⁹
- MS® Works Suite 2000 ■ MS® Windows® 98, SE
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty² ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

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- 48X Max CD-ROM Drive
- SB Live! Value Digital Sound Card
- Altec Lansing® ACS-340™ Speakers with Subwoofer
- V.90 56K Capable⁶ PCI Telephony Modem for Windows⁹
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- 3-Yr Limited Warranty² ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

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- 32MB NVIDIA GeForce 4X AGP Graphics Card
- 12X Max DVD-ROM Drive
- SB Live! Value Digital Sound Card
- Harman Kardon HK-595 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- V.90 56K Capable⁶ PCI Telephony Modem for Windows⁹
- MS® Works Suite 2000 ■ MS® Windows® 98, SE
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty² ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service⁴

\$2399  **E-VALUE CODE**
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